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THE INDEPENDENT

Tuesday 19 May 1998 45p (IR 50p) No 3,614

Blair to spend extra £6bn on NHS

By Colin Brown
Chief Political Correspondent

AN EXTRA £6bn is to be announced by Tony Blair for the health service in July, in a dramatic rolling programme of increased spending to tackle the waiting lists and fulfil pledges on the NHS before the next election.

The Prime Minister will mark the 50th anniversary of the NHS with an announcement designed to take the heat out of the attacks on the Government which campaigned on an election pledge to cut waiting lists by 100,000, but has seen them rise by the same amount.

The £2bn year-on-year increases

over three years will be on top of the £2bn added to the total budget for health in the 12 months since Labour came to power, and will take the NHS budget through £40bn a year by the time of the next election.

Frank Dobson, Secretary of State for Health, has apologised for the rise in waiting lists, partly brought about by his decision to give priority to accident and emergency cases during the winter. He knows his job is on the line.

Mr Dobson has persuaded the Prime Minister to give him his backing for the additional money against pressure from the Treasury, and is at present engaged in a battle with it over the final details. Mr Blair is

deeply concerned at the soaring waiting-list figures which will show a further rise on Thursday although he has been told the figures will not be as bad as the additional 43,000 predicted.

Ministers believe the trend shows the rise in the numbers waiting is slowing down and the figures will reveal no patients are now waiting more than 18 months as guaranteed in the patients' charter.

Having secured an extra £300m to tackle the winter crisis, Mr Dobson won a £1.2bn increase for the current financial year and an extra £500m in the Chancellor Gordon Brown's spring Budget. A total of

£320m was allocated to cutting waiting lists and Mr Dobson will announce that a further £65m is to be spent on moving more elderly patients out of hospital, to release their beds for more surgery cases.

Mr Dobson wants more money for higher pay next year for nurses, who gave him a rough ride at their annual conference last month. The increases

for the health service – confirmed by Treasury sources – are part of the radical restructuring of public spending, which is now reaching crunch decisions.

The Comprehensive Spending Review, reaching across all Whitehall departments, is due to finish in a fortnight, but it has run into trouble. Mr Brown has privately complained that ministers have failed to live up to the new culture of extra money in return for modernisation in the Blair government.

Many spending ministers have failed to modernise, but have added 10 per cent to their baselines for last year. Treasury sources said Jack

Straw, the Home Secretary, had been praised for modernising, but had asked for a higher bid, when he realised his Cabinet colleagues had refused to make cuts.

Those seeking big increases in their budgets include David Blunkett, the Secretary of State for Education and Employment, who has warned Mr Blair he could break his "vow" to the 1997 party conference to spend more of Britain's wealth than the Tories on education unless he gets more. John Prescott, the Deputy Prime Minister, wants the Treasury to release around £1bn of council house receipts for housing – an increase on the £80m released this

year – and is using a report yesterday on the state of Britain's housing as leverage; Clare Short, Secretary of State for International Development, has refused her budget on the poor, but wants more to meet pledges on the Third World.

The Strategic Defence Review is also running into flak from the Treasury in spite of backing from Mr Blair. George Robertson, Secretary of State for Defence, submitted the report to the Cabinet Defence and Overseas Policy committee, with an offer to cut £500m from the total £21bn defence budget. But the Treasury is unpicking the report to seek more savings.

Mother finally cleared of killing her disabled baby

By Ian Burrell
Home Affairs Correspondent

A "DEVOTED" mother wept uncontrollably in the Court of Appeal yesterday as her conviction for killing her severely handicapped daughter by disconnecting her breathing tube was overturned.

Julie Watts, 32, a former psychiatric nurse, was cleared of murder by a Manchester Crown Court jury last September, but was convicted of the manslaughter of her 14-month-old baby Abigail, who had a combination of serious birth defects.

Inside

'No one could imagine how much we have been through ... it has destroyed our lives', page 4

Mrs Watts of Little Hulton, Greater Manchester, who was given an 18-month jail sentence, suspended for two years, went to the Court of Appeal in London to tell three judges that her conviction was "unsafe".

She hugged her solicitor and sobbed as Lord Justice Swinton Thomas, sitting with Mr Justice O'Connell and Mr Justice Poole, allowed her appeal.

The court ruled that the

trial judge, Mr Justice Sachs, had given the jury inadequate direction on the issue of manslaughter.

Mrs Watts' daughter Abigail was born with a rare skull deformity, clover leaf syndrome, which left her brain-damaged, deformed, partially sighted, deaf and unable to breathe or feed without help.

The jury at her trial heard that Mrs Watts was constantly at her daughter's bedside, and on one occasion saved her life with emergency resuscitation.

At the end of July 1995, staff at the Royal Manchester Children's Hospital responded to Mrs Watts' cries for help and found that a tracheotomy tube had become detached from Abigail's throat. The child suffered respiratory failure leading to cardiac arrest. Mrs Watts, who has a baby daughter, born in November 1996, and a nine-year-old son, denied interfering with the tube.

After yesterday's appeal verdict she described her ordeal. "This has been the most horrendous two and a half years of my life," she said. "I am very pleased about the outcome today, but I would like more questions asked about the events leading up to her death."

Her solicitor, Kristina Harrison, said: "She is just taking it one step at a time now and I cannot say yet whether she will be claiming any compensation."

The court ruled that the

Cook accused

Pakistan N-test

TONY BLAIR and Robin Cook were last night accused by the Opposition of wrecking any chance of prosecuting the mercenaries who are at the centre of the "arms-to-Africa" affair.

Page 2

IT IS not a question of if nuclear tests will be carried out in Pakistan but rather when – both the public and politicians are in support of a response to the tests carried out by India.

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The battle is on to secure the allegiance of the 26 per cent of voters aged 18-30 who, according to an opinion poll, are undecided on how to vote. Of those who have made up their mind, 66 per cent intend to vote Yes, and 34 per cent No.

On an electoral base of 334,387 for that age group, it

means 84,000 young people are still weighing their options.

David Trimble and John Hume are expected to appear together for the first time in the campaign at a concert in Belfast's Waterfront Hall tonight. Bono, of the band U2, is also expected to be there. Two thousand Protestant and Catholic sixth-formers from across the Province will be in the audience.

A source close to Mr Trimble said last night: "This agreement is all about securing the future of the young people of Northern Ireland. Standing on the stage at the Waterfront will enable him to appeal to young



Trimble: Peace plea to young

voters for whom we are trying to build the peace."

In the final days before the Yes campaign to deliver a 70 per cent majority for the accord,

which is seen by the British and Irish governments as providing a mandate and forming a secure basis for next month's elections to a new assembly.

The Prime Minister will visit the province for a second time in two weeks to safeguard the Stormont agreement. Visits are also expected by William Hague and Paddy Ashdown.

Polls continue to show many voters are still undecided. One in the Daily Telegraph shows that across all age groups 21 per cent are undecided. But, say researchers, it is the young undecided who are likely to swing behind the peace settlement.

The polls also show the ac-

cord has the overwhelming support of Catholics. In the 18-30 age group 75 per cent of those intending to vote Yes were Catholics, and across all ages, in the Telegraph poll this rose to 89 per cent.

The same survey indicates that among Protestants 43 per cent say they will vote in favour, with 27 per cent against and another 27 per cent still making up their minds. This appears to show an upturn for the Yes camp among Unionists. An Irish Times poll last week showed 45 per cent of them intended to vote No, and 35 per cent Yes.

The polls also show the ac-

Policing Ulster, page 11

INSIDE GUIDE: WEATHER, P2 ● CROSSWORDS, P32 AND EYE P10 ● TODAY'S TELEVISION, EYE P12 ● FULL CONTENTS, P2

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This man is desperate for food. Our answer was to spend £8m so that eight world leaders (and their wives) could talk about him



The menu at a function hosted by Cherie Blair for the wives of the G8 leaders in Birmingham, and right, a man begging for food in Timbuktu, Mali, one of the nations afflicted by Third World debt

By Louise Jury

THOUSANDS of miles from Birmingham the people of Mali knew nothing of the grand meeting of First World leaders last weekend who gathered, with their wives and entourages running into thousands, to discuss the global economy.

The man begging for morsels in the picture, like millions more in Africa, can expect a life that is poor, under-nourished and short. He illustrates graphically, awfully, the gravity of Third World poverty.

These were the poor peoples debt relief campaigners had in mind when they demanded that the leaders of the world's industrialised nations cut debts owed by the poorest countries to the West.

They received a few fine words and little else from the summit in Birmingham where the wining, dining and diplomacy cost the kind of huge sums that would have saved thousands of lives.

Birmingham, by contrast, is very happy. The summit has put it on the map and pumped an estimated £10-11m into the city's economy. Of that, more than £8m was accounted for by the Foreign Office's budget for the event – courtesy of the British taxpayer. Another £2.6m was spent on hotels, £600,000-plus on food and drink and £380,000 in the city's shops.

Mali sinks beneath debt and sand

By Paul Vallely

THE £10m spent on the summit in Birmingham would go a long way in Mali, one of the countries whose outstretched hand was spurned by the leaders of the G8 this weekend.

It is one of the hottest countries in the world. It is also one of the very poorest. A man has an average life expectancy of 43. Two-thirds of its people have no access to safe water. Almost 80 per cent of its women are illiterate.

Its people live off a meagre diet of millet, rice and sugar. One in 10 of its children die before they reach their first birthday. People, on average, have less than 50 pence a day to live on – and yet each one of them owes about £205, in theory, to the world's richest nations.

Mali is a 'country of fa-

well placed when it comes to choosing a stage for future heads of state gatherings."

Her deputy, Bryan Bird, added: "As a city, we raised ourselves a couple of notches in esteem. We established Birmingham on the world stage – this was the weekend when Birmingham arrived."

It had done everything to be ready. Of top of more than a decade of inner-city regeneration, renovation programmes on the Council House, the City council's headquarters, were brought forward to help the city look its best. They planted their flower beds earlier than usual and laid on street entertainment in an £800,000 programme to make sure world leaders saw the best of Birmingham. Glorious sunshine helped.

Tony Blair, in his concluding summit statement, thanked the city for its "extraordinary and stunning display".

There is no doubt this is now a major international centre," he said.

Birmingham is now assessing the final impact. At the Foreign Office officials are adding up the final figures, too, but hope the summit will have cost less than the FCO's £8.3m budget.

The Commonwealth heads of state conference in Edinburgh and the Asia Europe Meeting (ASEM) in London in April both came in under budget.

Everyone looked and saw

that Birmingham was booming. Yet the comfortable aura of success did not embrace everyone.

Tony Juniper, of Friends of the Earth, was furious at the large numbers of vehicles used to shuttle the leaders around the city.

And most unhappy of all were the debt relief campaigners who want greater action to reduce the debts of the poorest countries.

They argue that the current debt relief scheme for the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) is inadequate, because it will do nothing to alleviate poverty. They believe it is merely concerned with getting such countries into a position where they are able to pay their debts.

Jean-Louis Sarbib, vice-president of the World Bank, told American journalists: "It's not really wiping off the debt. It's

just making sure these countries remain good credit risks."

The final summit communiqué endorsed the relief scheme but gave no targets for getting the poorest countries to qualify for debt relief under the scheme. The commitment was even weaker than the Mauritius mandate proposed by Gordon Brown, the Chancellor, last year, which called for three-quarters of the poorest coun-

tries to be in the scheme by 2000.

Jessica Woodroffe, of the World Development Movement, said: "If Tony Blair had got the G8 to commit to a meaningful package of debt cancellation, he would have made his mark as a world leader and touched the lives of millions," adding that it had turned into exactly the kind of talking shop he said that he wanted to avoid.



Photograph: Steve McCurry/Magnum

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Sobbing mother cleared of killing daughter

By Ian Burrell
Home Affairs Correspondent

"YOU don't know what you have done to me. You really don't," she wailed. The anguished cry of Julie Watts in the Court of Appeal yesterday signalled her recognition that a nightmare experience at the hands of the law was finally over.

A woman who by every account was a "devoted mother", had been charged with the murder of her hugely-handicapped 14-month-old daughter, Abigail, who died when her breathing tube became disconnected while her mother was at her bedside.

At her trial last September, the judge had said Mrs Watts had carried a burden of "awful proportions". Yet she was found guilty, not of murder but manslaughter, and given an 18-month sentence, suspended for two years.

Yesterday, after eight months of having her awesome burden replaced by the shame

of a conviction for killing her own child, three Court of Appeal judges finally cleared her name. Outside the court and comforted by her husband Andrew, who had been with her throughout the hearing, she said: "This whole thing should never have happened," she said. "No one could ever imagine what we have been through and how much our lives have been destroyed."

Mrs Watts, 32, whose dedication was such that she often argued with doctors over her daughter's treatment, was due to take her home on 27 July, 1995.

Her trial heard that after taking luggage to the family car she returned shouting: "It's Abby, help, help." The child's breathing monitor, which was designed to sound an alarm if she was in difficulty, was switched off and the tracheotomy tube, which should have been secured by three double knots, was lying in her cot.

The trial judge, Mr Justice Sachs, told Mrs Watts: "What you did was seriously wrong and lest anyone thinks that the manner I am dealing with you indicates any approval of euthanasia or anything of that kind, they are in error."

But at yesterday's appeal,

counsel for Mrs Watts, Richard Henriques QC, said there was a "real possibility" that the tube had been removed by an unknown third party.

He told the court: "Abigail's

appearance was such that a stranger may have felt intense feelings directed towards the apparent helplessness of her plight.

"This was a child who could

not see, nor hear, nor swallow,

nor smile, aged 14 months.

Giving judgment, Lord Justice Swinton Thomas spoke of "absolutely overwhelming" evidence that Mrs Watts was "a completely devoted mother to Abigail". There was no direct evidence to connect the mother with the removal of the tracheotomy tube and the prosecution case at trial was circumstantial.

Julie Watts. The Court of Appeal praised her as a 'devoted mother'. She spoke of 'lives destroyed' by the prosecution



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IN BRIEF

Undertaker charged with cremating wrong woman

AN undertaker is to appear in court after a 58-year-old woman was wrongly cremated and a 97-year-old woman buried in her place by mistake.

David Turner, 54, of Thetford, Norfolk, will appear before Thetford magistrates on 2 July, charged with breaches of the 1902 burial and cremation Acts, police said.

An exhumation last week showed that Edith Kemp, 97, was lying in what was thought to be the grave of Sheila Gent, 58, at Fulmodeston, Norfolk.

Both women lived in Thetford and were laid out in Mr Turner's funeral parlour after dying within a day of each other in December 1996.

Union sets BBC strike days

BECTU, the largest union in the BBC, has warned the corporation that its 6,500 members will strike on 4 June and 9 June in action that will disrupt drama, soaps and World Cup coverage.

Ballots conducted by the broadcasting union at the weekend revealed that more than 70 per cent of its members supported a series of one-day walkouts over disputes with BBC management. Bectu estimates that around 10,000 BBC staff will turn out for the two days of industrial action. Its members are predominantly "behind the camera" technicians and crew.

Bectu members are also to be balloted at London Weekend Television at the end of next week on possible strike action over a 3 per cent pay rise imposed by the company. Bectu plans to lobby MPs about the gradual privatisation of public service broadcasting during a march on the House of Commons on 9 June.

Janine Gibson

Lies covered whale slaughter

RUSSIAN and Japanese whalers slaughtered almost 10 times more sperm whales than they admitted officially before the practice was banned in 1986, according to new figures.

Up to 70,000 sperm whales - the largest animals on Earth - were illicitly hunted down between 1949 and 1971, data presented to the International Whaling Commission (IWC) shows. The killings were covered up with "deliberate" lies by the Japanese and KGB threats to Russian scientists, claimed the Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA), based in London. It said this shows commercial whaling cannot be controlled, and should not be allowed to restart.

Charles Arthur

£280,000 damages for leg

A MARKS & Spencer sales assistant whose leg had to be amputated after an accident at work was yesterday awarded £280,000 damages at the High Court against the company.

A metal grille fell and struck the left shin of Karen Gower, 28, at the company's store in Felixstowe, Suffolk, in September 1991. The bruising injury triggered a reflex sympathetic dystrophy (RSD), and three years later, the leg was amputated. A year after that, Ms Gower was walking on crutches when she fell and struck her right knee; now she risks losing that leg as well.

Diana fund acts to ban dolls

THE Diana, Princess of Wales Memorial Fund yesterday launched legal action in the United States in an attempt to stop the sale of unauthorised "Diana dolls" and other merchandise. It has filed a complaint in California against the Franklin Mint.

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Mayfair fine-art auction house is latest British 'trophy asset' to be snapped up by a foreign investor

Billionaire Frenchman pays £721m for Christie's

By Nigel Cope
Associate City Editor

CHRISTIE'S International, the auction house with a history stretching back more than 200 years, itself fell under the hammer yesterday when it was sold to a French billionaire.

François Pinault, one of France's wealthiest businessmen, who also owns the Château Latour vineyard and the Colorado ski resort of Vail, is paying £721m for Christie's, where he is a regular customer.

The auction house, established in 1766, is the latest in a series of British "trophy assets" snapped up recently by foreign investors. It follows the sale of the Savoy hotel group to an American company and the impending sale of Rolls-Royce Motors to either BMW or Volkswagen of Germany.

However, a spokesman for Mr Pinault denied that the sale might affect London's position as one of the world's top art centres along with New York. Mr Pinault's company Artemis, which conducted the deal, plans to keep the Christie's board of directors in place and they will still run the company from the head office in London.

But the new owner will take advantage of the liberalisation of the French art sales market, due to go through this summer. Currently dominated by 400 licensed auction houses, which are all French, the market will be opened up to international competition. "Paris will become an important market, but it won't match New York or London's expertise," one art expert said.

Mr Pinault said: "There is a significant opportunity for Christie's as a private business as the trade in works of art continues to grow around the world."

In the City, analysts said Mr Pinault had paid a full price and that the art market might be affected by the economic turmoil in the Far East which is reducing demand and by the lack of large single art collections now available.

But Guy Bell, an analyst at the stockbroker Beeson Gregory, said: "Christie's has always been a target. People are interested in it because it's a bit of a trophy buy."

Mr Pinault acquired a 29 per cent stake in Christie's earlier this month from Joe Lewis, the Bahamas-based

investor who himself tried to buy the whole of the company only a few months ago – although at a much lower price.

From its origins in 1766, Christie's has grown to become a powerhouse in the world art market, locked in a fierce battle with arch-rival Sotheby's which is controlled from the United States. It recently overtook Sotheby's to claim the top spot in art sales, although Sotheby's is still more profitable.

In the art market recession earlier in the decade, Christie's slashed its workforce by nearly one-quarter and even replaced some of its art experts in top positions with bankers and businessmen. The fruits of the changes were slow to appear but Christie's ended last year with pre-tax profits of £35m.

Christie's first sale was on 5 December 1766 in Pall Mall and it went on to conduct some of the world's greatest auctions of the 18th and 19th centuries. Among them was a negotiated sale of British prime minister Sir Robert Walpole's painting collection to the Russian tsarina Catherine the Great.

Christie's currently offers sales in more than 80 separate categories, which include all areas of the fine and decorative arts, collectables, wine, stamps, motor cars and even sunken cargo. Christie's has handled some of the world's best-known sales. These have included the auction of the dress collection of Diana, Princess of Wales, last June – one of the gowns, a blue silk and velvet, sold for \$200,000 (£125,000) – and the Loeb collection in New York which raised £57m from works by artists such as Cézanne and Manet.

Others sales have included:

■ *Portrait du Dr Gachet*, by Vincent Van Gogh, sold for \$82.5m at Christie's New York in 1990.

■ The red slippers worn by Judy Garland in *The Wizard of Oz* film, fetched \$165,000 at Christie's New York in 1988.

■ A big egg-shaped pearl, called "La Reine," made \$864,280 at Christie's Geneva in 1988.

■ A Stein bear dubbed "Teddy Gitz," fetched £110,000 in 1994.

■ A bottle of 1787 Château Lafite wine, sold for £105,000 in 1985. The bottle was engraved with Thomas Jefferson's initials, "Th J", which added to the value.



Lord Hindlip (left), Christie's chairman, and the finance director Peter Blythe. Photograph: Brendan Corr



Pinault, 61: Started career lurking at edge of bankruptcy courts

Sold – to the rich man from Brittany

By John Lichfield
in Paris

FRANCE is, famously, a capitalist country without capitalists. But there are exceptions and the exceptions tend to be very capitalist indeed.

François Pinault, 61, the diminutive Breton who has just bought Christie's, started out with his father's small, rural logging business 35 years ago. He now controls a global business empire worth an estimated £1.5bn, stretching from the ski slopes of Vail, Colorado, to the Château Latour vineyards in the Medoc, to the FNAC record, books and electrical stores, to the Prismic and Printemps department stores.

In the classic French fashion, the holdings are arranged in a "cascade", or series of loosely interlocking boxes, with the Artemis holding company at the centre.

In one respect, Mr Pinault is a true exception to the French rule. Unlike other Gallic empire-builders such as Bernard Arnault of LVMH, he is not a scion of the politico-bureaucratic establishment in Paris. He never attended any of the elite educational establishments; he never even passed his baccalaureate. He started his career by lurking on the edges of the bankruptcy courts, picking up failing businesses cheap.

In another sense, Mr Pinault is a classic entrepreneur of the French type, a man who has made good by understanding how to operate within the ponderous complexities, vanities and favouritisms of the French state and political system.

In the late Eighties, he abruptly moved up several divisions to the national and then the international league. For 20 years he has been a close friend of President Jacques Chirac: a friendship which is said to have boosted his career in 1986-88 when Mr Chirac was prime minister and Mr Pinault made his first big in-

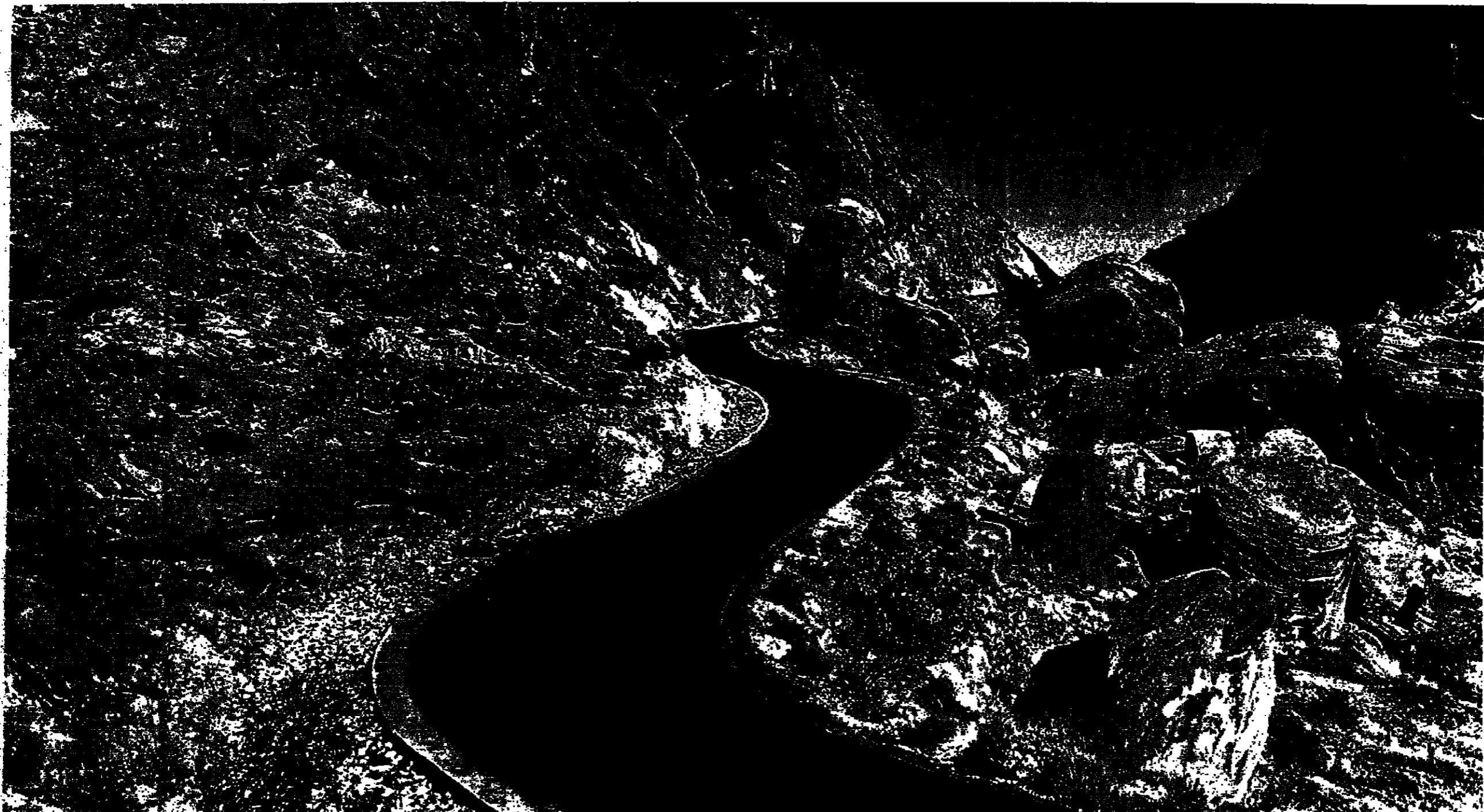
dustrial acquisitions, picking up struggling companies with state aid.

"Pinault knew at each stage all the details of what his competitors were offering," a senior civil servant told the French magazine *Le Point*. Allegations of this kind – nothing clearly illegal, but many things which have left a bad taste – have followed Mr Pinault. He was a great beneficiary of the frantic expansions of the state-owned bank Crédit Lyonnais in the late Eighties and early Nineties. When Crédit Lyonnais, a great investor in US junk bonds, was forced to sell out in 1992, Pinault bought most of the bonds – with a soft loan from Crédit Lyonnais.

Some of his US acquisitions have tripled and quadrupled in value since then; they did not cost him a centime. Similarly dubious circumstances surrounded his acquisition of the Au Printemps stores in 1991. He bought another chain, Conforama, for £450m; sold it to Printemps for £460m six months later and in lieu of cash took two-thirds of the Printemps shares, in effect buying two companies for the price of one.

At the same time friends describe Mr Pinault as cultured and, in his own way, a man of principle. From a chance meeting when they were both young, he has always vehemently detested another Breton, Jean-Marie Le Pen, leader of the far-right National Front. He gave a large amount of money to the philosopher and film-maker Bernard Henri-Lévy for his work on behalf of Bosnia.

Why the interest in Christie's? Mr Pinault has built up a valuable collection of modern art; some see the acquisition as a hobby. Others point to the deregulation of the French auction market, which will give huge opportunities to international firms such as Christie's and Sotheby's. It would appeal to Mr Pinault's sense of humour to own the blue-chip "British" firm invading the French market.



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Supergun 'vendetta' cost £1m

By Ian Burrell
Home Affairs Correspondent

MORE than £1m of taxpayer's money has been spent on a failed government prosecution linked to the Iraqi supergun affair, despite a warning from Labour in opposition that the case amounted to a "sordid political vendetta".

The action brought by the Department of Trade and Industry against four businessmen from the collapsed arms company Astra was denounced yesterday as "a debacle".

While in opposition, Michael Meacher, the environment minister, wrote to the then President of the Board of Trade, Michael Heseltine, calling the case a "vendetta", and an "example of the use of an administrative procedure for the purposes of political victimisation".

Yet since the last election the prosecution has been vigorously pursued by DTI officials. Yesterday it collapsed in court after Margaret Beckett, now President of the Board of Trade, formally agreed to drop proceedings. Costs were awarded against the DTI, although the judge praised Mrs Beckett for intervening to drop the case.

But the fact that the case was continued for nearly a year after Labour came to power will raise further questions about the relationship between ministers and their officials.

The DTI had sought to disqualify Gerald James, John Anderson, Christopher Gumbley and James Miller as company directors. All had worked for the arms company Astra.

The Government was aware that the Meacher letter, a copy of which has been obtained by *The Independent*, would be produced as defence evidence.

It has also emerged that DTI officials handling the case tried to withhold a letter written on behalf of the department's own inspectors, recommend-

ing that no prosecution be brought against Mr James and two of the directors.

The document was finally disclosed to the defence in November. Mrs Beckett decided to drop the case last month after the judge asked DTI lawyers for assurances that she had personally considered the case.

The DTI's case against the Astra directors began in 1994 and followed the collapse of the company two years earlier after its decision to purchase PRB, an ailing Belgian munitions firm.

The directors later argued that the acquisition of PRB had been at the behest of the British government, which was seeking to frustrate the Iraqi supergun project, to which the Belgian company was supplying propellant. It was later revealed that Stephan Koch, a member of the Astra board, was working for the British intelligence services.

Astra was also found to have been supplying arms to Iran in contravention of a government arms embargo. The former Tory minister, Jonathan Aitken, had been a non-executive director of the company and a back-bench MP at the time. He denied knowledge of the deals.

Mr Meacher said in his letter that Astra had collapsed because "the MoD and the security services in particular were anxious to remove all trace of their involvement [in illegal arms deals]."

He said it was "patently capricious to hound the Astra directors" when there had been no DTI inquiries into other financial disasters such as the Maxwell scandal and the Lloyds insurance collapse.

Kevin Robinson, Mr James's solicitor, said yesterday: "If, as we suspect, Mr Meacher has intervened he should be praised. However, questions must be asked as to whether Mrs Beckett was fully briefed by her officials on proceedings that were brought in her own name."



Photograph: Neville Elder

Bafta applauds cutting-edge comedy

By Paul McCann
Media Editor

The BBC's cutting-edge comedies *The Fast Show* and *I'm Alan Partridge* secured establishment credentials last night when they won four awards at the television Baftas in London.

Paul Whitehouse, the co-writer and producer of *The Fast Show* who won British Comedy and Royal Television Society awards last year, picked up the best light entertainment performance award as well as a best light entertainment series prize for the show itself.

The comedian Steve

Coogan won the best comedy performance award for his suspiciously plausible portrayal of sad Norwich DJ Alan Partridge in *I'm Alan Partridge*. The series also won the best comedy show award.

Daniella Nardini won the best actress for her role as Anna in *This Life*, BBC 2's cult drama about twenty-something lawyers which ended after two series - and some controversy - last August. Ms Nardini beat Miranda Richardson, who was nominated for her role in Channel 4's *A Dance to the Music of Time*. He beat Bafta's film award-winner Robert Carlyle, who

was nominated for the whimsical drama *Hamish Macbeth*, and his *Full Monty* co-star Tom Wilkinson, who won best supporting actor at the film Baftas. For the first time Bafta has this year separated its television awards from the film prizes which were handed out last month.

The best drama series award went to BBC 1's comedy-drama *Jonathan Creek*, which was created by *One Foot in the Grave* writer David Renwick and Susan Belbin. The best drama serial went to Tony Marchant's hard-hitting portrait of *London, Holding On*, which starred Phil Daniels.

actress Kathy Burke, who was nominated for *Tom Jones*.

The best actor award went to Simon Russell Beale for *A Dance to the Music of Time*. He beat Bafta's film award-winner Robert Carlyle, who

was nominated for the best factual programme award went to *The Nazis - a Warning From History*. The current affairs and journalism award went to *Panorama* for "Valentino's Story", a harrowing child's-eye view of the Rwandan genocide.

The BBC dominated the awards, winning most of the categories, but ITV's honour was salvaged by the *South Bank Show*, which won the Huw Weldon arts programme award for its profile of Gilbert and George. It was also rescued by the readers of the *Radio Times* who voted *A Touch of Frost* the winner of the Lew Grade Award.

Crowded road to recovery

By Lea Patterson

DIRECT LINE, one of the UK's best-known insurers, is to take on the AA and RAC with the launch of its own road recovery arm, Direct Line Rescue.

It hopes to benefit from the dispute between the AA and RAC that followed the RAC's decision to sell its motororing organisation, a deal which will net £35,000 for each of the 12,000 members of the RAC's Fall Mall club.

Direct Line hopes a decision to "personalise" quotes - or to charge customers according to age and post code - will help it undercut market leaders by as much as 50 per cent. It was "very pleased" with its first day of business, and had been selling policies at the rate of two every minute. It did not have to answer any call-outs yesterday - time will tell whether the insurer manages to meet its ambitious target of reaching customers within an average of 35 minutes.

It hopes pricing and marketing techniques learnt in the insurance market will give it an edge in the recovery business. Customers with newer cars based in more affluent areas are likely to do best under Direct Line's plans to tailor quotes according to individual circumstance. The company said it would not refuse to provide higher-risk customers with quotes.

The RAC said: "It's almost discrimination against young people who might not be able to afford particularly good cars or who may not live in the best area. We don't discriminate on age or vehicle. I can't see the benefit of doing it that way." The RAC works on a "flat fee" - once a customer chooses an RAC product, they pay the same, irrespective of age or address, although there is a "no-claims" discount which applies on one of its services.

In contrast to the AA and RAC, Direct Line will not have a nationwide patrol, but will use a network of independent garages it is sharing with Europ Assist, an existing player in the market.

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Modest promise to treat more patients could prove a serious embarrassment at the next general election

Waiting list challenge confounds Labour

By Jeremy Laurence
Health Editor

HOSPITAL waiting lists may yet turn out to be the rock on which the Labour Government founders, in spite of plans to spend billions more to solve the problem.

The spectre of a queue of NHS patients snaking ever further into the distance as the next election approaches is one that haunts ministers. What seemed a modest pre-election pledge – to cut the queue by less than 10 per cent – has become a burden and an embarrassment.

Worse, it may be unachievable. In the four years from 1990-91 to 1994-95 the annual number of NHS patients treated rose by 800,000 as hospitals, feeling the heat of the Tory NHS market, cranked up productivity. Yet waiting lists rose during the same period by 100,000, just as they did in the first nine months of this government.

Where did all the extra patients come from? A look at the referral patterns delivers an instant answer. GPs increased the proportion of patients they referred to a specialist by almost a third. In 1990-91, they referred just over 5.5 million patients to hospital. In 1994-95 this figure had grown to over 7.3 million.

In four years, almost two million extra patients were crowding into out-patient clinics, half finding their way on to waiting lists. Richard Hamblin, a researcher at the King's Fund, the health policy think-tank which published the figures in the *Health Service Journal*, says

there are two explanations: either GPs were spotting more people with the same degree of need whom they had not previously referred or specialists were lowering their thresholds and offering operations to less sick people, or both.

It appears that as hospitals increased their work rates, doctors saw the opportunity to get more patients treated and upped their referral rates.

Waiting times have remained at an average of around 13-14 weeks since the 1960s, despite a doubling of the numbers on the lists. The faster patients are treated from the waiting lists, the faster new patients are added to them.

Mr Hamblin says this implies that there may be a waiting time acceptable to GPs and specialists. "If increases in activity seem likely to reduce waiting lists to below this level they refer more patients. List size and activity levels remain in equilibrium to ensure that waiting times remain unchanged."

Throwing money at the problem – the Secretary of State for Health, Frank Dobson, has allocated £320m to the task in England this year – may yield short-term gains but will ultimately aggravate the problem. As doctors become aware that waiting lists are shrinking they will refer more patients.

Labour's second term could depend on whether ministers can time the short-term dip in the lists to coincide with the next election before they start to grow again, as they inevitably will.

Waiting lists in England



Diane Coyle: 'There need be no waiting lists. They are only one of many possible indicators of excess demand for health care' Photograph: Nicola Kurtz

'Cut queues, but rationing will remain'

Diane Coyle, Economics Editor, explains why her pregnancy has convinced her that there is no need for waiting lists

FOR some conditions there is no NHS waiting list at all. Birth is one of them. I'm seven months pregnant and happy to report that I will get a hospital bed and midwife when I need them in July, and not a year later.

Nor is this the only list-free area of health care. For all the horror stories about patients being ferried from one hospital to another in search of treatment, accident and emergency care is almost always there on demand. So is treatment for acute illnesses.

This just goes to show that there need be no waiting lists at all. They are only one of many possible indicators of excess demand for health care.

But equally, making people queue is sometimes the best way of parcelling out scarce resources. The Government has got itself hung up on a single

sound bite indicator that fitted nicely on its pledge card but is not the only or even best way of easing rationing in the NHS. For the bottom line is that, despite the extra cash wrung out of the Chancellor for health spending, there is still going to be rationing. In my case, it takes the form of tediously long visits to a dilapidated ante-natal clinic with too few doctors. For the unfortunate waiting in a busy casualty department it might mean lying on a trolley in the corridor, and for others it means waiting six months for an operation.

Frank Dobson's waiting list war is dishonest as long as he does not acknowledge the hard arithmetic that underlies health care. To focus on the size of the lists alone will produce the kinds of skewed results that are typical of bureaucratic planning. Just as the fact that out-

put in the Soviet Union was measured by the weight of goods produced meant radios were manufactured with a brick in the middle, measuring NHS success by cutting waiting lists will push the rationing elsewhere in the system, such as even shorter stays or admitting fewer patients on to hospital waiting lists.

The real policy issue is how much more the Government is willing to cut from other expenditure or raise through taxation to finance a big increase in NHS resources. Growth in demand for health care outpaces incomes: the technology improves in more and more expensive ways, people's expectations rise and the ageing

of the population imposes additional burdens.

As a result, real spending on health grew 3 per cent a year on average for 18 years under the Conservatives. It would take a very generous increase in the NHS budget – well over £10bn in cash terms – for the next three years just to match the Tory pace of growth, and even that was not enough to keep voters happy.

Until the Government admits this, and stops pretending that lopping 100,000 off the numbers waiting for treatment is cure-all for the ills of the NHS, those who can afford it will continue taking out private medical insurance or paying for routine treatments. If we fall for the pretence that getting waiting lists down will mark the end of rationing by numbers, we will just end up with rationing by price instead.

Picasso case man jailed for 3 years

FORMER cat burglar Peter Scott was yesterday jailed for three and a half years for his part in a plot to steal a stolen £750,000 Picasso painting.

Scott, 67, who had netted an estimated £30m since the Thirties was supposed to have "retired" from crime 10 years ago to become a celebrity tennis coach. But he could not resist one last crime when *Tete de Fenn* came his way following an armed robbery at the Lefevre Gallery in Mayfair, central London, in March last year. Snaresbrook Crown Court was told.

Scott, who numbered Sophia Loren, Elizabeth Taylor, Judy Garland, Mia Farrow, Ginger Rogers and Zsa Zsa Gabor among his victims, breathed a sigh of relief as he heard his fate. He had told reporters he expected to receive up to six years.

Judge Andrew Brooks told him and his accomplice, Ronald Spring, 70, who received a two-year sentence suspended for 24 months, that what they had done was so "grave and serious" that there was no alternative to custodial sentences.

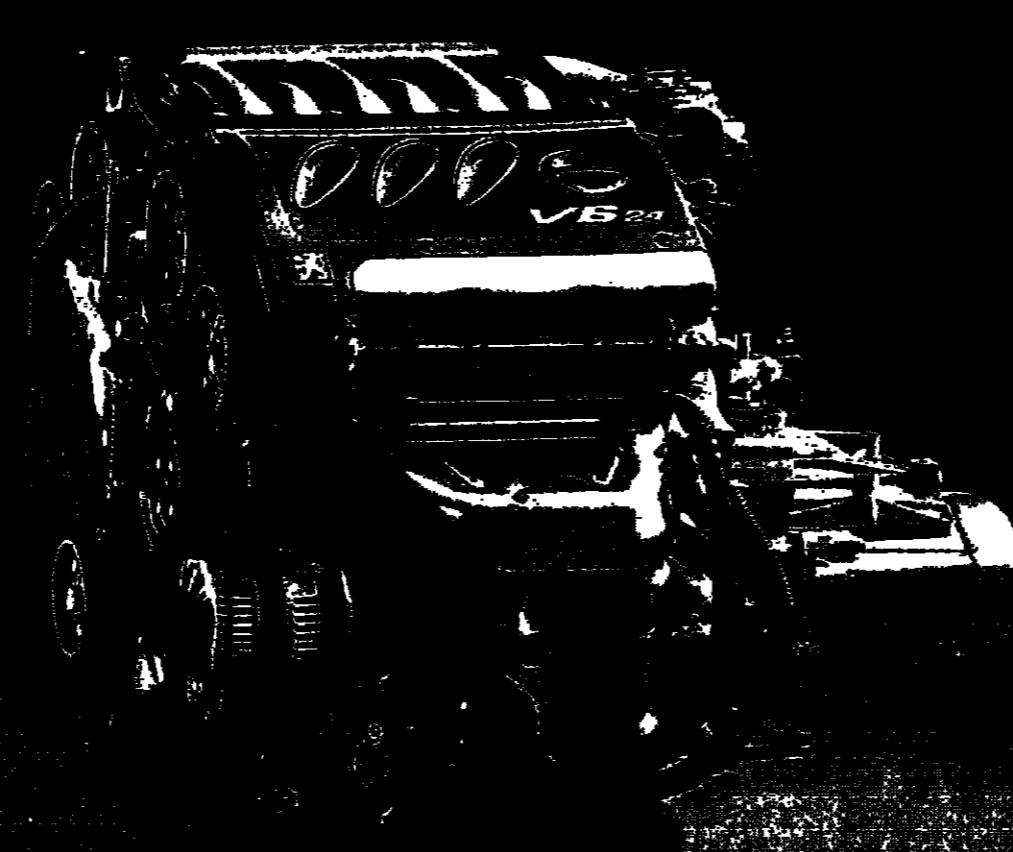
"There is evidence to suggest that there is a growing and active market for stolen art of a very high value in this country and, I dare say, abroad, and this type of offence has become prevalent," the judge said. He was told that Scott had served a total of 22 years in previous sentences.

Minutes before the jury was due to consider its verdict following a five-day trial, Scott, of Islington, north London, entered a guilty plea to conspiring to handle the masterpiece.

Property dealer Spring, who agreed to dispose of the painting for Scott, admitted his guilt at the outset. The former legal executive, of Southgate, north London, who was arrested trying to sell the masterpiece to an undercover officer seven days after it had been stolen, agreed to help snare his partner in crime in a police sting.

Spring, who handled Scott's divorce in 1969 and then lost touch with him until the burglar published his autobiography, *Gentleman Thief*, said Scott had handed him a suitcase containing the Picasso hours after it had been taken, demanding £70,000-75,000 within seven days.

The officer who led the police operation said he believed Scott "revelled in infamy". Detective Constable Andrew Kennedy, of the National Crime Squad, called him "a likeable rogue" but said he had still committed "very serious crimes".



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Taxpayer faces bill of £5bn for rigs' disposal

By Colin Brown
Chief Political Correspondent

THE TAXPAYER faces a bill of up to £5bn to subsidise the oil industry's disposal of around 250 oil and gas rigs, some of which might be dumped in the sea.

The disclosure that the taxpayer will pick up part of the bill for the 'clean-up' through tax relief, over the next 25 years led to protests at the Commons last night from Matthew Taylor, the Liberal Democrat environment spokesman, over an alleged betrayal of Government promises.

A Greenpeace spokesman attacked the taxpayers' subsidy for the gas and oil industry. "Having the taxpayer pay for cleaning up the mess caused by the gas and oil industry is outrageous," he said.

Margaret Beckett, the President of the Board of Trade, said in a written Commons reply to Mr Taylor that gross decommissioning costs for the 250 rigs over the next 25 years were estimated to be in the range of £7bn to £10bn at current-day prices. "The Inland Revenue estimates that around 50 per cent of the costs will be met by the Exchequer through tax relief," she added.

The peak years for decommissioning the rigs will be between 2003 and 2012. *The Independent* revealed that around 60 could be dumped at sea. Mrs Beckett did not confirm the number but said the "great majority" would be brought onshore for re-use, recycling or disposal.

However, the Government was assessing the heavy steel rigs in deeper water on a case-by-case basis "with decisions based on solid analysis and in the light of open and transparent consultation".

Mr Taylor said Michael Meacher, the Environment Minister, had said last year there would be no more "Brent Spars" - a reference to the rig which was to be dumped at sea until Greenpeace led protests across Europe, using pollution claims which were later challenged.

The Liberal Democrat MP said dumping oil rigs at sea would be a "complete betrayal" of numerous promises to protect the North Sea. "It is a little dubious that the oil industry should be getting the taxpayer to pay the bill for cleaning up the mess they have left," he added.

Mrs Beckett said decommissioning costs generally qualified for tax relief under the normal Petroleum Revenue Tax and Corporation Tax rules. Royalty relief is currently available where royalty has been paid on the licence, she said.

The Government's policy for disposing of the rigs was based on a presumption in favour of land disposal except where, taking account of the environment as a whole, such a course was neither safe nor practicable.

Greenpeace said it believed the total cost of decommissioning had been deliberately inflated by the oil industry because they wanted some dumping at sea, which was the cheaper option.



Harman: 'The childcare strategy puts children and families at centre-stage in public policy' Photograph: Nicola Kurtz

Straw holds out olive branch to angry prison officers

By Ian Burrell
Home Affairs Correspondent

JACK STRAW, the Home Secretary, will today attempt to win over the support of prison officers by offering to revoke legislation which prevents them from taking industrial action.

In an address to the Prison Officers' Association conference, Mr Straw will offer a hand of conciliation to jail staff who are angry over pay levels and working conditions at a time when prisons are at record levels of overcrowding.

Mr Straw will offer to dispense with the hated sections 127 and 128 of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994, which was introduced by his pre-

decessor, Michael Howard, who made a conscious decision to take on the prison union and brought in the measure to render it powerless to strike.

Mr Straw is himself insufficiently confident of the goodwill of jail staff to do away with protection against industrial action in prisons altogether. He would want to create a "back-stop" measure by introducing new primary legislation which would allow the Government to impose reserved legislative restraint on industrial action in prisons. Home Office sources said this would make it clear that "there was absolutely no place for disruptive action in the prison service".

Mr Straw is, however, pre-

pared to set up an independent tribunal to resolve disputes over the pay and working conditions of prison officers.

At the conference today in Portsmouth, Mr Straw will say: "I want to see a constructive partnership in the prison service." He will describe the new measures as "a significant step towards partnership and away from confrontation. It would identify clear duties and responsibilities for all signatories and it could and should herald a new era in industrial relations within the prison service."

Although prison officers are unable to take direct industrial action there has been concern that staff in some jails have been operating an effective work-to-

rule policy. By all arriving for work at the prison's gatehouse at the same time, they ensure a serious disruption while staff are cleared by jail security.

At this week's conference, delegates will discuss recruiting new members from staff in private prisons. A merger with Scottish prison officers will also be debated as a way of strengthening the hand of the union.

According to a report issued yesterday, more than six out of ten prisons in England and Wales are overcrowded - with some holding nearly twice as many inmates as they were designed for.

Shrewsbury jail is in the worst position, with 335 inmates behind walls designed to hold just 182, said the Howard

League for Penal Reform. The young offender section at New Hall women's prison in West Yorkshire was at 203 per cent capacity, holding 89 girls in space designed for 44, while the juvenile section at Feltham Young Offenders' Institution, west London, holding 15- to 17-year-olds, had 208 boys in accommodation built for just 100.



Straw: Hand of conciliation

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year-olds, had 208 boys in ac-

commodation built for just 100.

Bill and Tony make a swinging couple

TONY BLAIR hit it off with Bill Clinton yesterday when the US President gave the Prime Minister his first lesson at golf, writes Colin Brown.

The Clintons and the Blairs had spent the night at Chequers and after breakfast the President could not resist a round of golf on a nearby course.

After their impromptu round of four holes, the President was full of praise for the Prime Minister's golfing skills.

"I told him how to hold the club, how to stand, how to swing and it was embarrassing how good he was."

"The guy who was going around with us was a four handicap... and he couldn't believe the Prime Minister was so good and he's never hit a ball before - amazing!" said the President.

"All I had to do was hit it off with Bill Clinton yesterday when the US President gave the Prime Minister his first lesson at golf, writes Colin Brown.

The Clintons and the Blairs had spent the night at Chequers and after breakfast the President could not resist a round of golf on a nearby course.

But a blushing Mr Blair put it all down to beginner's luck and the talents of his teacher.

At least Mr Blair will be able to claim one-upmanship against his Chief Press Secretary, Alastair Campbell, who reportedly tried his hand at golf last autumn at a course in Scotland during the Commonwealth Heads of Government conference.

One witness later described Mr Campbell's swing as being "like a caveman trying to kill his lunch".

Unison grows impatient with Labour's trade-union policy

By Barrie Clement
Labour Editor

SIGNS OF growing exasperation with Tony Blair will emerge today in the party's biggest union affiliate which pays £1.5m a year to Labour.

While senior figures in the union movement have so far

managed to keep the lid on

much of the dissatisfaction

at a key political conference of

Public Service Union Unison will

make clear their growing impa-

tience of government policy and

demands changes to their or-

ganisation's strategy.

Delegates to the meeting in

Torquay will attack their own of-

ficials for failing to campaign for

the union's left-wing policies.

Activists are seeking a repeal

of all anti-union law, rather than

what they see as the piecemeal

and half-hearted reform envisaged

by Mr Blair. They will also

demand that the national mini-

imum wage be set at £4.61 rather

than the £3.60 an hour likely to

be recommended by the Low Pay

Commission later this month.

The conference is expected to

endorse a resolution calling for

higher state expenditure and for

the abolition of the Private Fi-

nance Initiative which seeks busi-

ness input into public projects.

It takes place ahead of the

publication of the "fairness at

work" White Paper which is ex-

pected to be published on

Thursday. Leading Unison mem-

bers are particularly angry

about the document's predict-

ed proposals on union recogni-

tion. Activists believe that

collective bargaining rights

should receive the backing of the

law if endorsed by a majority

vote in a ballot. Ministers, how-

ever, are insisting that 40 per

cent of all those eligible to vote

would need to back recognition.

Geoff Martin, Unison's Lon-

don convenor, said Labour

seemed to be grateful to accept

the money on the basis that the

union's representatives failed to

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Radon threat worse than Sellafield radiation

By Jeremy Lauance
Health Editor

THOUSANDS of children are being exposed to levels of radiation higher than those permitted for workers in the nuclear industry, researchers have found.

Several thousand are thought to live in homes affected by naturally occurring radon, the odourless, radioactive gas that seeps up from the ground. The

first direct evidence of its effects, published today, shows that it increases the risk of lung cancer by up to half in people exposed to high levels over many years.

The findings, by a team of scientists at Oxford University including Sir Richard Doll, the cancer epidemiologist, will increase pressure on ministers to tighten building regulations to ensure that all new houses built in affected areas have sealed floors to keep out the gas.

One radiation expert said: "It is a small risk but it is definitely there. When you see young children getting a higher dose than workers at Sellafield [the nuclear reprocessing plant] it is clear something should be done."

Around 50,000 people are estimated to live in houses with concentrations of radon gas above 200 becquerels per cubic metre. This is 10 times the average for the whole country.

The worst affected areas are Devon and Cornwall but high levels are also found in homes in Derbyshire, Northamptonshire, Somerset and in parts of Wales and Scotland.

The researchers, from the Imperial Cancer Research Fund's epidemiology unit at Oxford, say one in 20 cases of lung cancer is attributable to radon.

Previous warnings about the risks have been based on evi-

dence from miners who were exposed to very high levels but there was less certainty about the effect of lower levels present in people's homes. The current study, published in the *British Journal of Cancer*, involved measuring the level of radon in homes occupied over the previous 35 years by people diagnosed with lung cancer.

The results showed that a level of 200 becquerels was associated with a 20 per cent increased risk and a level of 400 becquerels with a 40 per cent increased risk. The risk continued to rise with rising concentrations. Among adults who smoke, the risk was multiplied.

Sir Richard said radon contributed to 1,800 deaths a year from lung cancer compared with 33,000 caused by smoking. However, if no one smoked there would be 4,000 deaths from lung cancer, of which 200 would be caused by radon.

He said: "Most radon-induced cancers are produced in conjunction with cigarette smoking. At all levels of radon found in UK homes, cigarette smoking remains the major cause."

Dr Michael Clark, of the National Radiological Protection Board, said that people living in affected areas and people who fear their house is affected can get a meter to measure it from us.

■ National Radiological Protection Board helpline: 0800-614529

Wheel of fortune returns for the motorbike

By Stuart McDiarmid and Steve Boggan

SALES of motorcycles have increased by 21 per cent as congestion-bound car drivers swap the frustration of four wheels for the speed and glamour of two.

While sales of cars slipped by 6 per cent last month, motorcycle industry experts are expecting their best figures since 1980 – an estimated total of more than 110,000 for the year.

Industry insiders attribute the growth in sales to two factors: the return to two wheels of middle-aged "born-again bikers", and the advantages of avoiding traffic jams and spewing out motor-car levels of pollution.

Just five years ago, the industry was in the doldrums, with sales of only 46,000. However, while motorcycle companies celebrate the latest figures – 9,980 motorcycles and 1,425 mopeds sold last month – they will bear in mind that they have a long way to go before they achieve the sales levels of 1980, when 315,000 new motorcyclists mounted up.

Advertisers believe that motorcycles no longer conjure up images of greasy rockers. Instead, top-of-the-range models like Harley-Davidson or Ducati are targeted at ABC1 professionals with money to spend. In the 1980s they might have spent £35,000 on a Porsche; in the 1990s they would rather spend £10,000 on a race-standard superbike.

Scooters, too, once associated with mods and considered the poor relation of the motorbike, are enjoying a resurgence thanks



Top of the range models like Harley-Davidson are helping to lead the sales revival for the two-wheel industry

to slick redesigns and improved engine technology.

"They have become extremely fashionable," said a spokesman for the UK importers of Piaggio Ltd, the world's biggest manufacturer of scooters. "Celebrities and 'It' people are all over them – Oasis, Patsy Kensit, Simon le Bon. Then there's traffic pres-

sure. There are thousands of frustrated drivers out there who just will not use public transport but some are prepared to use a scooter."

Jeff Turner, of Yamaha UK, said the industry is disappointed that the two-wheel solution to traffic congestion has not been promoted by the Government. Because of the

recent upturn in sales, however, he said: "I hope the Government will at last acknowledge the contribution commuter motorcycles can make to green issues and congestion."

The growth in British sales are mirrored throughout Europe, where most markets have shown a healthy rise last year.

In Germany, by far Europe's largest market and globally second only to the US, sales leapt to almost 314,000.

Ironically, there is still a minor crisis in the British industry. While the official figures look healthy, there is another level of "parallel sales" which go unreported and unrecorded. These are bikes brought in

by importers from Europe,

where prices are – apparently inexplicably – much lower.

Precise figures are not available, but Kevin Neesam, owner of Britain's largest parallel importer, DK Motorcycles, believes parallel imports may now account for over one quarter of new sales for large-capacity sports machines.

Photograph: Glyn Griffiths

Tourist death continues to baffle doctors

By Diana Blamires

Derek Machin, a neurology surgeon at Aintree Hospital Trust on Merseyside with 20 years' experience, said it was highly unlikely surgical equipment could have been left in Karen's stomach after eight years.

Mr Machin said: "A very careful count is made before and after any operation of the instruments and the swabs used. It is very, very rare to have an instrument left inside the body. That would mean we are either

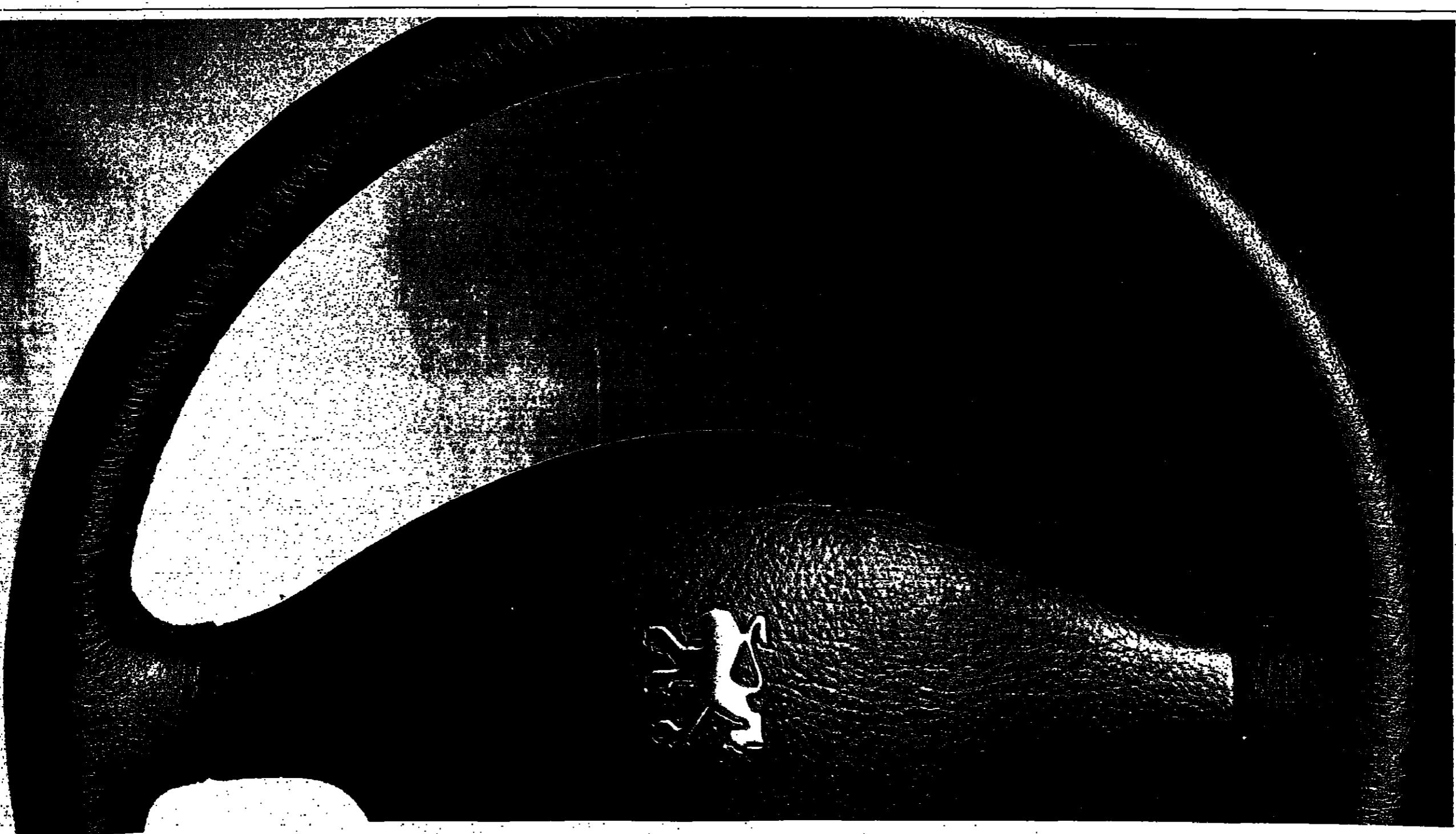


Karen Murray: Collapsed

dealing with a seriously incompetent situation or looking at something entirely different."

Mr Machin said that if such items had been left inside Miss Murray's stomach, two things could have happened. Either they could become infected, causing a condition called sepsis – infection caused by pus-forming bacteria – or they caused the bowel to become blocked.

Miss Murray, a student at Southport Technical College, was also a waitress at a local hotel.

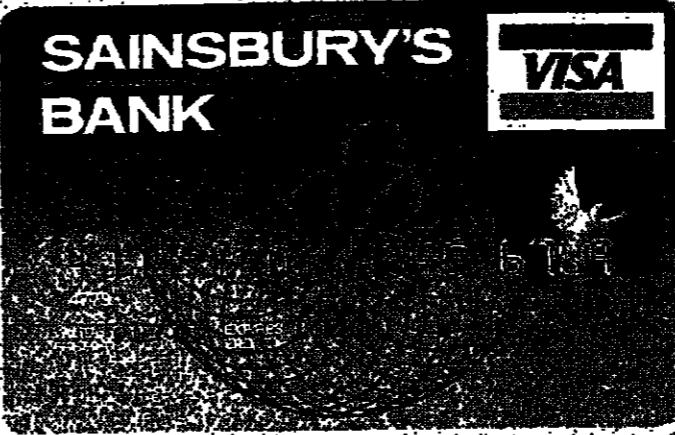
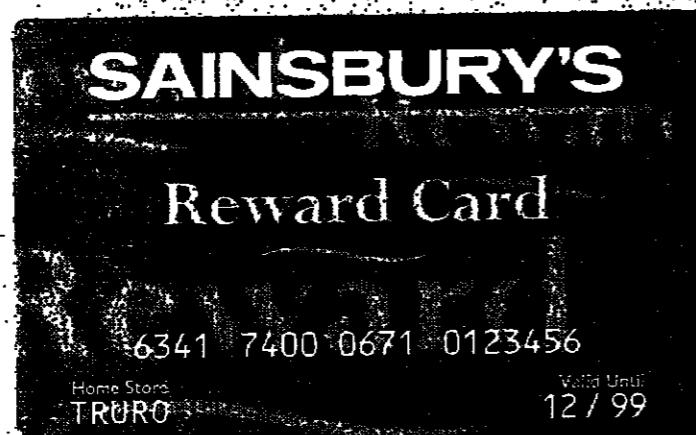


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Prejudice, policing and the future of Ulster

In the run-up to Friday's referendum on the peace deal, Unionist bodies are concerned that the RUC will be weakened just as paramilitaries are released on the streets, writes Kim Sengupta

FEAR of the future is corrosive. But it is this fear that is driving thousands into the "No" camp in the coming referendum. And one of the greatest fears centres on the future of the Royal Ulster Constabulary.

Proposed reform of the RUC will, a significant number of Unionists feel, succeed in weakening it fatally just as paramilitary prisoners are being released. And, despite repeated assurances to the contrary, the belief on the streets in loyalist areas is that some of these bombers and gunmen will be replacing sacked officers in a new-look force.

The RUC has, in many ways, come to symbolise the deep rifts in Ulster's divided society. To republican activists it is the mailed fist of the state used to preserve the status quo. To Unionists it is a vital protection against sedition and terrorism. The force itself claims to be one of the most accountable in Europe and as impartial as possible while operating for long stretches in what is in effect a civil war.

Chris Patten, chairman of the proposed independent commission which will consider reform of the RUC, will not have an easy job. The Chief Constable, Ronnie Flanagan, has already said the setting up of the commission was designed for a political purpose.

And he has warned against the undermining of the force's operational independence. Unionists are vociferous in their defence of the police. Sinn Fein, on the other hand, cites allegations of human-rights abuses and sectarianism, and wants the RUC to be disbanded and reconstituted with "a minimum of 40 per cent nationalists."

Republicans also want to drop the "Royal" prefix and stop the flying of the Union flag from stations, claiming it is provocative. The Chief Constable is against a name change but has said he will examine the flag question.

Significantly, on the day of the announcement of the Patten inquiry, the flag was lowered to half-mast over Andersonstown Barracks in nationalist West Belfast.

If peace does break out, the size of the RUC is expected to be reduced dramatically, with as many as 10,000 of its total strength of around 14,000 laid off to bring it into line with the rest of police forces in the UK. The prospect fills loyalists with unease.



A member of the Royal Ulster Constabulary from Musgrave Street station setting out on patrol (above) in the nationalist Market area of east Belfast. In the Bessbrook RUC station, South Armagh (below), a reminder of the ever-present danger of policing in Northern Ireland is provided by photographs of officers killed by terrorists

Photographs: Brian Hains

What both the police and the mainstream parties agree on is the need to have more Catholic officers. At present they make up just 8 per cent of the total, compared to 11 per cent in 1969 and 21 per cent in 1973.

The RUC says it is attempting to redress the balance.

Its recruitment posters says it "particularly welcomes applications from the Catholic community".

In the past two years Catholics made up 20 per cent of applicants, and 20 per cent of those recruited.

Other statistics are not nearly so encouraging. Over the past 30 years 299 RUC officers have been murdered by terrorists and thousands more injured. Through the 1970s and 1980s, 10 to 15 officers were killed each year.

Add to this the fact that Catholic RUC officers are particularly vulnerable to attacks from republican paramilitaries and that some have also complained about prejudice and harassment from a small number of Protestant colleagues, and



the picture looks anything but promising.

The hard edge of policing Ulster, and how different it is to the rest of the UK, can be seen in South Armagh. Here, despite the ceasefire, many roads are considered too dan-

gerous and police and military personnel fly to Crossmaglen by helicopter from Bessbrook. One police officer is accompanied by up to a dozen soldiers, and the delivery of a summons on a routine crime matter has to be done in body-armour

and with armed back-up. Not so long ago there were firefights between the IRA on the ground and helicopters gunships.

Police and army vehicles were hit by bazookas and rocket-propelled grenades.

Even now, Bessbrook is said to be the busiest heliport in Western Europe. In the steel-reinforced police station, nicknamed Fort Apache, the perimeter wall bears a gaping hole punched through in a mortar attack.

Chief Inspector Edward Graham and Sergeant Jimmy Bingham are talking about policing Bandit Country, the state of the paramilitary arsenal and the hopes for peace.

Sgt Bingham, based at Crossmaglen, said: "I know it's the might of the British Army which has kept me alive. But I joined up to be a police officer and not a soldier. I'd love to be able to do the job like a colleague in, for example, Yorkshire. We all hope that day will come."

At Musgrave Street police station, in Belfast, a unit is preparing to go out to do a spot of community policing. This being Northern Ireland, they are putting on flak-jackets and checking their Heckler & Koch sub-machineguns.

But even this is a step forward: the officers who will be going into

the staunchly nationalist Market area no longer need to be accompanied by the Army. Increasingly, local people bring their complaints to the police and a rapport is being built with individual officers.

In streets emblazoned with republican murals, there is banter between young boys and girls and the patrol. A female officer, Caroline Reid, is the particular favourite of the children.

But the appearance of normality is deceptive. There, hobbling along one of the roads of the estate, Friendly Street, is a teenager who had a leg blown away by a shotgun. It was a "punishment" shooting for stealing from a car.

A local woman says she deplores what happened to the boy: "It's ridiculous to say we want people who do things like that in a new police force. Unionists say they don't want paramilitaries in the police force and then the politicians whip them up by saying we, the Roman Catholics, do. That's simply not true."



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Parents say school reports could do better

By Judith Judd
Education Editor

PARENTS say teachers are too nice about their children in school reports, according to a new survey published today.

They want more frequent reports with more honest and critical information about how their children's performance compares with others'.

They also complain that parents' evenings are chaotic free-for-alls "like rugby matches" which offer no real chance to discuss pupils' progress, says the survey from the charity Research and Information in State Education which was carried out at Bristol University.

It reveals that today's reports are very different from those of 30 years ago when they were lit-

de more than lists of test scores and class positions.

Now just 16 per cent report on pupils' positions within groups. Parents complain of "a culture of non-competitiveness".

Reports, they say, are too bland and vague. "While parents ap-

preciated that children needed to be encouraged, they felt it was unhelpful to them if this was at the expense of honesty.

"It was often felt that nega-

tive comments were hidden ... Parents needed to look out for subtle indicators; for what isn't

mentioned as much as what is." This decoding, says the study, is more difficult for those whose children have the most difficulties.

The study of 200 schools and 70 detailed interviews with par-

ents found big variations in the frequency of reports. A fifth of schools send only one a year whereas some schools send out four or five a year.

Parents feel that a report at the end of the year often comes too late to help a struggling child. Their appeal for more

Photograph: Sally and Richard Greenhill

qued up for that, three-quarters of an hour."

Ministers are due to consult later in the year about how school reports may be improved.

The study concludes that teachers should stop worrying about discouraging pupils by making negative comments:

"There seems little to be gained by giving parents false impressions of their children's achievements at school." It also suggests that reports should include targets for each pupil.

Parents' evenings should be moved to the start of the year and used to clarify the year's plans and set targets with parents. They should be spread over two consecutive nights for each year or during the day at weekends or during half-term, even if that means more work for teachers.

Social divide grows for private pupils

By Judith Judd

INDEPENDENT schools are becoming more socially exclusive, says a research report published yesterday.

The proportion of independent school parents in the top social group, class A, is up 8 per cent compared with five years ago.

The percentage from every other social class is down apart from that for those at the bottom of the heap, which remains unchanged at 1 per cent.

Figures in a MORI poll commissioned by the Independent Schools Information Service (Isis) show that the proportion of private school parents from the top social class has doubled in a decade. Two similar polls were carried out in 1989 and 1993.

Last year, 30 per cent of parents were in class A compared with 15 per cent in 1989. Thirty-nine per cent were in class B and just over one-fifth were in social class C1.

A spokesman for Isis warned that the Government's decision to abolish the assisted places scheme which subsidises bright pupils from poor backgrounds in independent schools would make the position worse.

"On the face of it, it does look as though independent schools are becoming more socially exclusive. It is something we have been anxious about for some years. In the 1993 survey,

we assumed that it was the result of the recession. It may well be that that effect is still with us."

Nearly two-thirds of parents with children at independent schools have incomes of more than £40,000 a year.

In just over half the families questioned, the parents were first-time buyers and neither of them had attended a private school, a slight decrease on the figure in the previous poll.

For the survey, questionnaires were sent to 1,550 parents from 62 independent schools and 737 replied.

One in four of the respondents said that the decision to choose a private school was influenced by the fact that they had smaller class sizes, up from 18 per cent in 1993.

The proportion choosing an independent school because they were dissatisfied with state schools was up slightly, from 20 per cent to 22 per cent.

Six out of ten parents said that their children's opinion had influenced their choice.

Very few - just 16 per cent - said that they were concerned about a school's position in newspaper examination league tables, although 63 per cent rated exam results as important.

Boarding schools are still hampered by an image problem, the report says. "While they are thought to be good for character building," it says. "They are deemed weak academically and the preserve of the rich."

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Corruption inquiry creeps up on Chirac

By John Lichfield
in Paris

THE WIFE of the Mayor of Paris – a one-time close ally of President Jacques Chirac – was arrested yesterday as part of an investigation into the corrupt funding of the president's party, the RPR.

At the same time, new evidence emerged which pointed directly to the systematic embezzlement of city funds, for political and personal use, while Mr Chirac was the mayor of Paris in the 1980s.

A former senior city official, himself convicted of corruption, said that the Town Hall under Mr Chirac employed 300 "fictitious" people, at a cost of £10m a year. These "employees" ranged from the wives and children of politicians, to party "officials", to "writers, poets and dancers".

The Socialist Justice Minister, Elisabeth Guigou, questioned by a radio interviewer, said that there was no constitutional reason why the judicial investigation into RPR corruption could not be extended to President Chirac himself.

The inquiries into the byzantine affairs, and finances, of the neo-Gaullist party, founded by Mr Chirac in 1976, have been creeping closer and closer to the President for two years. In recent weeks, he has been cited by name in judicial documents for the first time.

What makes yesterday's developments even more threatening for the head of the French state is that the RPR has, itself, collapsed into a bear-pit of vicious in-fighting in recent weeks. The woman arrested yesterday, Xavière Tiberi, wife of the Mayor of Paris, Jean

Tiberi, is said to detest Mr Chirac – once a close family friend and ally – for failing to come to the aid of her husband.

Mr Tiberi, hand-picked by Mr Chirac to replace him as mayor when he became President in 1995, has been under savage assault – one private meeting actually came to blows – from another section of the RPR in the French capital. Mr Chirac has refused, publicly, to intervene to save his old friend. The knowledge that the lid might be about to blow off the illegal funding of the party is widely believed to be one factor fueling this civil strife.

The President's entourage is said to fear that Mrs Tiberi, who was placed under arrest yesterday morning, might implicate Mr Chirac even more deeply in the investigations. According to the newspaper *Liberation*, her

husband has warned the President that she is "fragile" and liable to crack under pressure.

Mrs Tiberi is under investigation for having been paid £21,000, by an RPR council in the Paris suburbs for a bogus report on business opportunities in the French-speaking world. Mrs Tiberi knew nothing about the subject; the report was full of platitudes, spelling mistake and typing errors. The councilor who commissioned it, also under investigation, said he paid the money to influence Mr Tiberi and through him Mr Chirac.

This is regarded as just one exposed corner of a complex tangle of false accounting, fictitious jobs and kick-backs on commercial contracts, used to fund the RPR in the 1980s. But how much does Mrs Tiberi know and how much is she prepared to talk?



Teenagers at Independence High School, in Independence, Kansas, give a helping hand to a first-year team-mate during a 'mud volleyball' match at the school

Photograph: Fred Hunt/AP

Old king Kohl urged to fight one more time

By Imre Karacs
in Bremen

THERE was no relaunch, not even a facelift. Chancellor Helmut Kohl, 68-years-old and 16 years in office, sought yesterday to energise his bedraggled army with the promise of more of the same, and was rewarded with the longest standing ovation of his career.

"With you I want to open the gate to the 21st century," he told Christian Democrat diehards at their party conference in Bremen, possibly the last under Mr Kohl's stewardship. Lagging eight points behind the Social Democrats in the polls, a record fifth term for the Chancellor seems ever further out of reach.

Perhaps that is why Europe's most durable leader, devoted so much of his two-hour speech to past exploits and achievements, and was so reluctant to provide a glimpse into the brave new world of the coming four years. "We want to win," he assured his followers. "We must fight for every single vote."

The spin-doctors had prepared journalists for a torrent of new policies, but in the end there was not so much as a trickle. The Chancellor spoke at length about the urgent need for reforming the tax system in order to create jobs. Failure to push such a package through the legislature was entirely the opposition's fault, he alluded.

He promised "sensible" policies for every item on his checklist, and tried to demonise his opponent, Gerhard Schröder as a "Trojan horse of the loony left". The pretext was the fall-out from last month's elections in the eastern *Land* of Saxony-Anhalt, where the local Social Democrats are about to form a minority government in cahoots with the despised former communists of the Party of Democratic Socialism.

This line of attack is beginning to emerge as one of the few election battle-fronts for September. Most other points of conflict, notably on job-creation, have already been usurped by Mr Schröder's campaign team. It was left to Manfred Kanther, the hawkish Interior Min-



Helmut Kohl: 'We must fight for every single vote'

ister, to bring up the other winning theme: foreigners. "We are not a multi-cultural society, and nor will we become one under the CDU," Mr Kanther vowed, admitting in passing that 7 million foreigners already live in Germany.

There is no doubt that immigration is a CDU trump card, but it remains to be seen whether the "red socks" strategy will succeed in casting Mr Schröder as a crypto-communist. The challenger stands too far to the right to be vulnerable to such an insinuation, but his failure to scupper the embarrassing deal in Saxony-Anhalt does expose his tenuous grip on the party machinery.

After months of internal wrangling, Mr Kohl did at least dispel the notion that he was no longer master of his own house. When he finished his speech, a banner was rolled out bearing "One more time, Helmut".

The party faithful applauded him for a full 10 minutes. Hildegard Müller, deputy chairwoman of the party, sported a badge with the words "Stay cool, keep Kohl". But outside another slogan is making the rounds: "Time for a change."



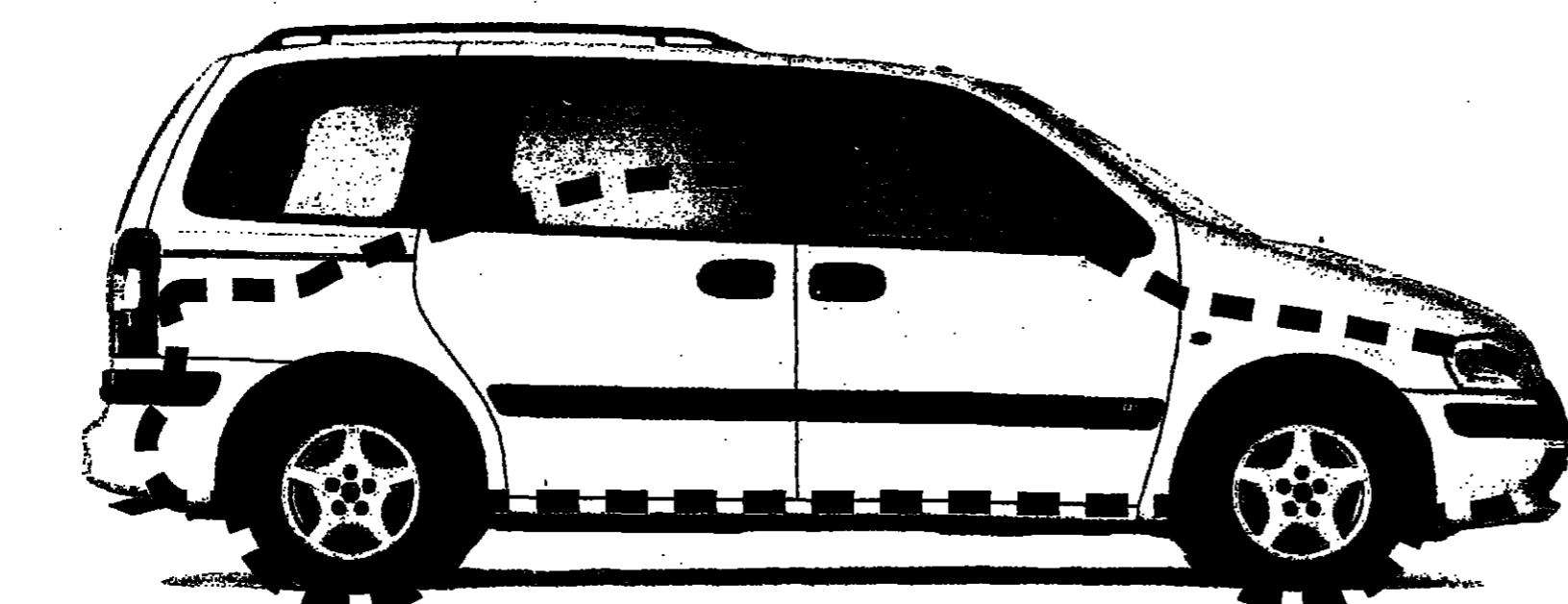
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Indonesia crisis: Government split could deal fatal blow to regime as generals threaten to crush planned protests

Army loyal as party turns on Suharto

By Richard Lloyd Parry
in Jakarta

THE STRICKEN government of Indonesia split down the middle yesterday as the head of President Suharto's party urged him to resign, while the chief of the armed forces hinted at a crackdown against demonstration planned for tomorrow.

Conflict between the civilian and military branches of Mr Suharto's government raises the stakes in a crisis that claimed 500 lives in rioting last week. After a day of extraordinary scenes in the national parliament, where thousands of student demonstrators chanted slogans calling for the President to be hanged, the Speaker, Harmoko, asked Mr Suharto to resign, amid violent unrest against his 32-year rule.

"The Speaker of the House, along with his deputies, hope for unity amongst the nation and that the President will wisely step down," said Mr Harmoko, former minister and crony of Mr Suharto who ranks third in the hierarchy after the President and Vice-President.

The call for his resignation from a parliament which for 30 years has never once challenged the President appeared to deal a mortal blow to Mr Suharto, who has become a figure of universal loathing among ordinary Indonesians. But last night, after four hours of speculation,

General Wiranto, commander-in-chief of the armed forces, announced that the statement was illegal.

"The Indonesian armed forces (Abri) understand this to be an individual opinion with no legal power," he told a press conference. "Abri thinks it is the duty of the President to administer the government and to reshuffle the Cabinet, to implement total reform and handle the crisis. This is crucial and with it Indonesia can move out of the period of crisis."

The country wakes this morning to the prospect of a president with no supporters other than his senior officers, and even their loyalty is uncertain. Rumours persist of a power struggle between Gen Wiranto and the commander of the elite Strategic Reserve, Lieutenant-General Prabowo Subianto, son-in-law of Mr Suharto.

The President's intelligence chief said Mr Suharto would respond to Mr Harmoko today, on the eve of what promise to be the biggest and potentially the most violent demonstrations yet. Millions of protesters are expected to turn out in cities around Indonesia tomorrow on the 90th anniversary of the foundation of the Indonesian nationalist movement. "It is easy for the nation to be destroyed," Gen Wiranto warned last night. "So I call on those

people who want to provoke anarchy to think again and desist from their activities."

But Amien Rais, a Muslim intellectual who has led the campaign for Mr Suharto's resignation, insisted the demonstrations would go ahead. "Labourers, fishermen, housewives and students now have one single demand - that Suharto must step down," Mr Rais told a committee in the parliament building. "Anything else is cosmetic; a Cabinet reshuffle is just a political cosmetic and it is not going to help."

Mr Suharto promised over

the weekend to reshuffle his Cabinet, which includes close friends and his eldest daughter. But yesterday only the minister for tourism had handed in his notice. Gen Wiranto blamed last week's riots, in which, in addition to the loss of life, 3,000 buildings were destroyed in Jakarta alone, on Indonesians who "were tempted, provoked and supported by irresponsible people motivated by their own or others' interests". He recommended setting up a "reform committee" including officials and civilians.

Richard Needham, page 23

Harmoko: Former crony has now urged Suharto resign



Students on a bus leaving the parliament building in Jakarta, where activists chanted slogans calling for Mr Suharto to be hanged. Photograph: AFP

Deal lets Europe trade with 'pariahs'

By Rupert Cornwell

AFTER marathon negotiations the United States and Europe have cleared the way for an end to the dispute over extraterritorial American sanctions on foreign companies dealing with Iran, Libya and Cuba, which have long poisoned transatlantic trade relations.

As President Bill Clinton, Tony Blair and the European Union Commission President Jacques Santer acknowledged after yesterday's annual EU-US summit in London, details remain to be worked out. But as Mr Blair put it: "This avoids a showdown, and establishes the basis for a lasting solution."

In recent years, nothing has irritated Europe so much as the US sanctions against investors in energy projects in Iran and Libya, and the separate Helms-Burton act, punishing companies which acquire assets in Cuba which Washington considers to have been illegally seized by Fidel Castro's regime.

But now a deal has been struck. Its essence is that the US will waive specific sanctions so long as parent countries of the companies involved co-operate with the "broad objectives" of American law, denying Tehran and Tripoli the means of acquiring nuclear and chemical weapons. As an Administration official put it: "We will deem these transactions sanctionable, but we won't impose sanctions."

The immediate effect of the agreement will be a "limited case waiver" lifting sanctions against France's Total oil group, in charge of a \$2bn gas pipeline project in Iran also comprising the Petronas group of Malaysia and Gazprom of Russia.

For all its imperfections the compromise was probably the feasible middle path between the insistence of Congress that sanctions are essential to bring Libya and Iran to heel, and the view of much of Europe that they are illegal.

The case of Cuba is trickier, given that Congress must assent to the waiving of sanctions against foreign firms which invest in illegally acquired property, as stipulated in the Helms-Burton bill. EU companies will escape so long as their governments do nothing to support them in Cuba, and keep up the pressure on President Castro to bring in democracy.

Students gather at parliament building to bait president

By Richard Lloyd Parry

struck for himself over the last three decades.

Two months ago, during the sitting of the "People's Consultative Assembly" or DPR, the parliament of stooges unanimously elected Mr Suharto for a seventh consecutive term. You needed two sets of identity cards to enter here, and protesters who tried to demonstrate outside were dragged away by police. Yesterday, it was a playground for Suharto-baiters and the most

remarkable thing of all was that no one seemed surprised. They arrived throughout the day in buses laid on for the purpose - students, former students and professors from Jakarta's most famous universities. The academics entered the assembly itself to deliver petitions demanding political reform and the immediate resignation of President Suharto. In a committee room, where he had been invited to speak by the par-

liamentarians who have fed off his patronage for three decades, the Muslim political scientist Amien Rais jabbed his finger at the official portrait of Mr Suharto which hangs in every public room in Indonesia. "He has to go, and the sooner the better" he said, to cheers from his supporters. "There can be no political reform without a change of national leadership. We are running out of time."

Outside the buildings - a

white Sixties shoe box alongside a green-roofed tropical mosque - students danced around the dozen or so tanks and armoured cars in the grounds. A few hundred soldiers looked on holding their automatic rifles, and trying to avoid the flowers which were periodically thrust towards their barrels.

"We don't want Suharto anymore!" was the mildest of the chants, which also included the ever popular "Hang Suharto",

and a new favourite - a children's nonsense rhyme, adapted to refer to the most notoriously greedy of Suharto's children, "Bambang Tut! Akan galing! Bambang and Tutut - their father is a dog!"

The army, the police, the parliament itself could all have stopped this happening, but they have given up. In part, they are afraid of provoking more of the terrible violence which

buried through Jakarta last

week. But there was something else yesterday: an acknowledgement that the students are simply right. After one of Suharto's closest allies, the leader of the house, Mr Harmoko, released his statement urging the President to step down, a student read it out loud. Yeltsin-like, from the top of a tank.

"I have never thought that I would come in here," said one young man. "But we are the people and so this is our own home."

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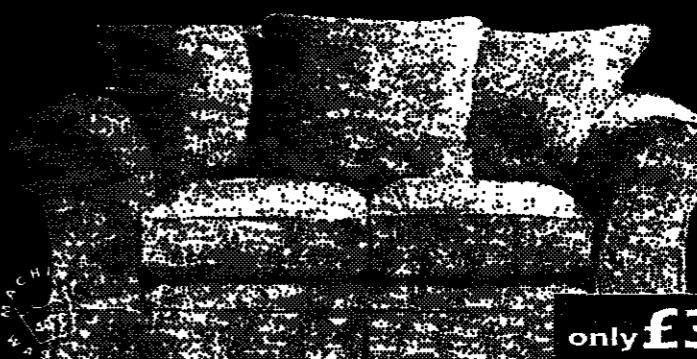
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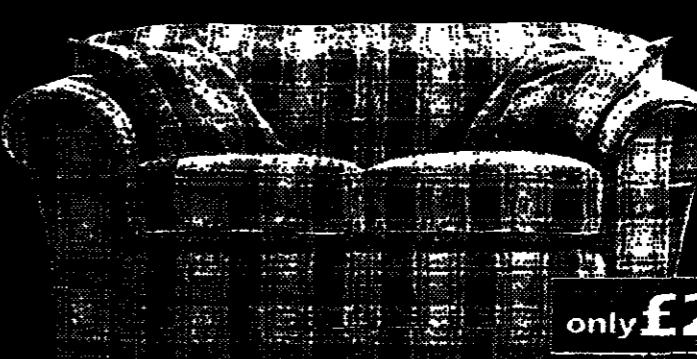
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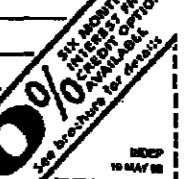
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Mafia moves in to turn Sarno's mud to gold

By Anne Hanley
in Rome

OPERATIONS to clear the millions of tons of mud which engulfed the town of Sarno two weeks ago are far from over, and reconstruction of the buildings, bridges and roads swept away by a natural disaster which left at least 125 people dead has not yet begun.

But already, magistrates fear, the promise of generous state funds to get the area back on its feet may have attracted the wrong kind of emergency help in an area which, a report out last week said, has Italy's biggest organised crime problem. Inquiries are now under way to assess whether local mobsters are seeking to turn mud into gold.

Among sludge-shovellers in Sarno and neighbouring villages, tales of louche characters returning under the cover of darkness to excavate arms

construction contracts are handed out "we will be looking very carefully into whom the money goes to".

Well they might. As recently as 1993, central government dissolved Sarno's town council when investigations showed it was still under the control of the mob. Nearby Quindici, also hit by the landslide, was run by a state-appointed administrator for three years in the early Nineties when no candidate could be found to run against the all-powerful Graziano clan in local council elections.

"Things have changed over the past few years," said Mr Siano. "Our police and magistrates have been very effective. Much of this criminal activity has dried up."

The council's attempts to play down the threat posed by the Camorra, as the local mafia is known, have angered the judiciary. If Sarno's Mayor Gerardo Basile lacks the courage to admit that the Camorra is strong in the Sarno area, then it would be better if he packed his bags," said Luciano Santoro, head of the anti-crime squad at the Salerno magistrate's office, in an interview with *La Repubblica* newspaper. "You can't save Sarno's reputation by pretending that the mob doesn't exist."

Santoro blamed local administrators for the "criminal" failure to halt ecological mismanagement, a process in which the Camorra was "deeply involved".

Those same clans, said Green MP Alfonso Pecoraro Scanio, will now be aiming to lay hands on the 50bn lira (£500,000) earmarked by the government for rebuilding dwellings for the 1,500 odd people left homeless in the landslide.

"They won't bid for the initial contracts, that isn't their way," he said. "They will wait until sub-contracts are up for grabs, then they'll move in. To combat this, the reconstruction money should be given directly to the households in need. By breaking it up into tiny lots, you make it less interesting for the Camorra."

Mr Siano said the town council, only too aware that this is historically a high-crime area, is now making up for lost time by checking anti-crime credentials. He promised that when re-

construction begins it will be

dire threat to the devastated eco-system around Sarno.

It is an accepted fact, he said, that the Camorra controls the waste disposal business in the area, and has few scruples about what it throws into its many unauthorised dumps. The mud being dug out of Sarno's streets is very probably making its way into these dumps, conveniently masking toxic or even radioactive waste placed there over the years.

"This area is chock-full of old

quarries and dumps, many of

which have not even been lo-

cated yet, let alone checked," he

said. "No one has been keeping

tabs on where the mud from

Sarno's streets is going."

Chances are, Mr Ruggiero said, much of it has ended up in Camorra dumps: "Now, we will never be able to tell what's in there. And after all they've been through, local residents may be about to find themselves with yet another ecological disaster on their hands: seriously polluted ground water."



Shifting the river of mud that devastated Sarno two weeks ago could prove lucrative for local bosses of organised crime

Photograph: Lepri Plint/AP



caches in mud-filled cellars are rife. As is speculation that the town council might, in the near future, find itself presented with hefty bills – bills it would be wiser not to refuse to pay – from some of the trucking companies transporting the detritus to local dumps.

According to Sarno town councillor Massimo Siano, few questions were asked about offers of assistance in the initial panic: "Frankly, faced with an emergency of those dimensions, had Salvatore Riina, the most famous mafioso of them all, come to me and said 'I've got 30 trucks and I can clear up for you', I would have told him to go ahead."

Mr Siano said the town council, only too aware that this is historically a high-crime area, is now making up for lost time by checking anti-crime credentials. He promised that when re-

Prague Greens smash symbols of global market

By Steve Crawshaw

EVENTUALLY, it seems, every dream must turn sour. Four Prague police officers were injured and several dozen people arrested at the weekend in protests in which shop windows, including that of McDonald's on Wenceslas Square, were smashed.

In the wake of the "velvet revolution" of 1989 – the most peaceful of all the east European revolutions, itself partly triggered by indignation at police violence – Prague became the place to be. It was always one of the most beautiful cities in Europe, even when it was locked in the political Stone Age of a hardline communist regime.

After 1989 it underwent a renaissance – politically under its famous playwright president, Vaclav Havel, and economically. It became a magnet for Western youth. What Paris had been to Americans in the 1930s, Prague became in the 1990s.

The once-quiet Charles Bridge, one of the city's most famous and elegant landmarks, became so crowded at all hours of the day with thousands of tourists and temporary residents that it was scarcely possible to glimpse the bridge itself. Backpackers and bus parties kept the place permanently busy.

However, not all Czechs were enthusiastic about the changes. The tourism boom brought millions of pounds in much-needed foreign currency as Prague became a leading destination, but Czechs often found themselves left out of the loop.

Radical economic change brought high unemployment and stark poverty. There was the constant tension, too, between

the need to do everything possible to bring foreign money into the city, and the need to preserve the distinctive character of Prague. Some began to feel that the Czechs' own identity was under threat.

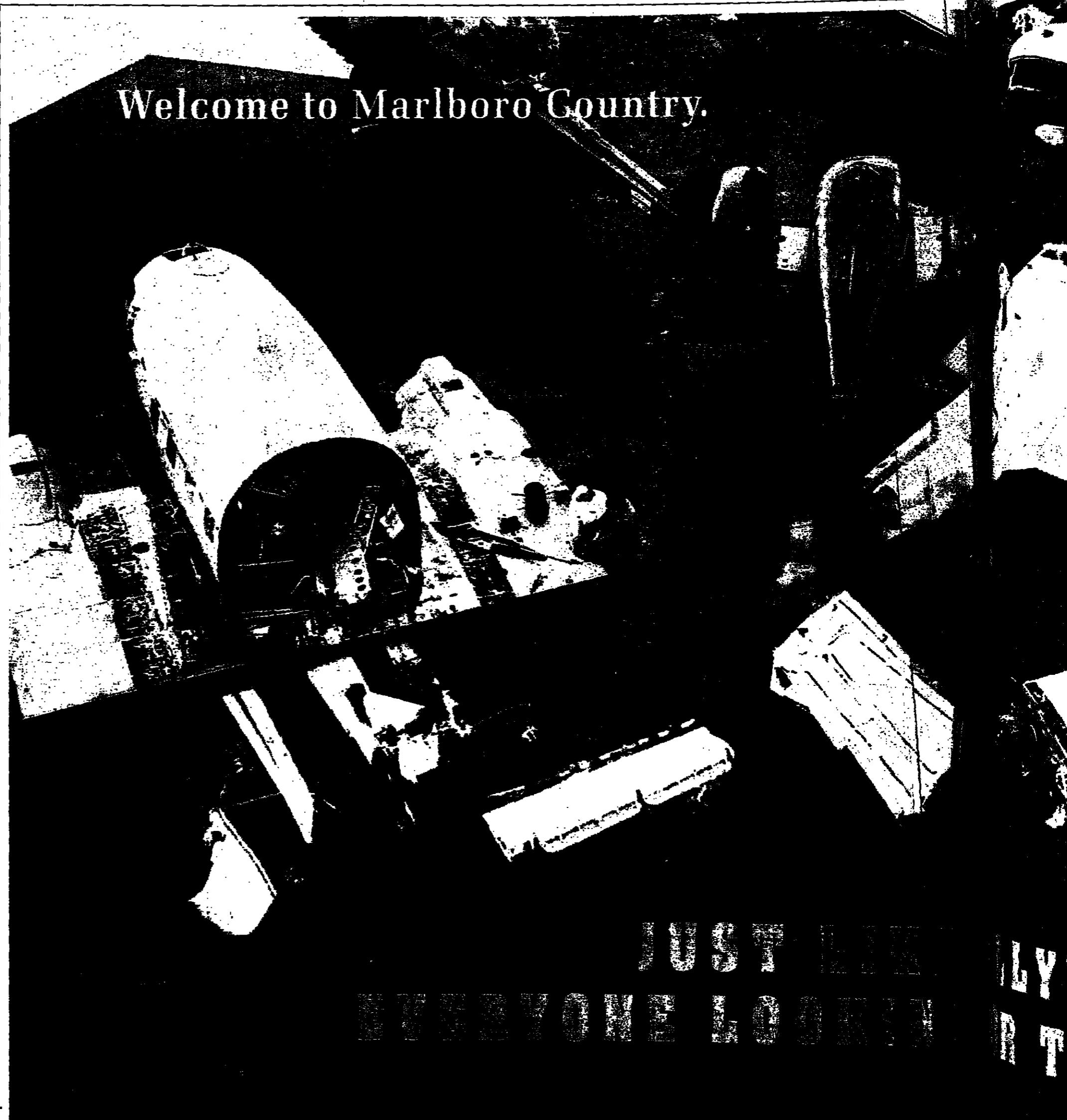
The latest demonstration, billed as the "Global Street Party '98" was in protest at the effect of economic globalisation on the environment. The clashes came after crowds gathered for a rock concert-cum-protest timed to coincide with the G8 economic summit in Birmingham. As several thousand left the concert and marched on the city centre, a small group hurled paving stones, breaking the windows of a McDonald's restaurant – the third such attack.

Mainstream environmental groups condemned the violence. Greenpeace regretted that the protest had been described as ecological, "because that damages the image of preserving nature and the environment". The chairman of the environmental pressure group Duda complained: "This is abusing the name of the environmental movement."

Martin Bursik, the environment minister, was equally quick to draw a line between the demonstrators and other environmental groups. He argued: "Nobody can seriously think that the programme of the ecological movement equals looting and stealing salami."

For other politicians, it was an opportunity to sling some mud ahead of parliamentary elections next month. The former Communist Party called on the interior minister to resign.

Vaclav Klaus, the former prime minister, attacked ecological groups who "abuse the issue of clean water for their own ends".



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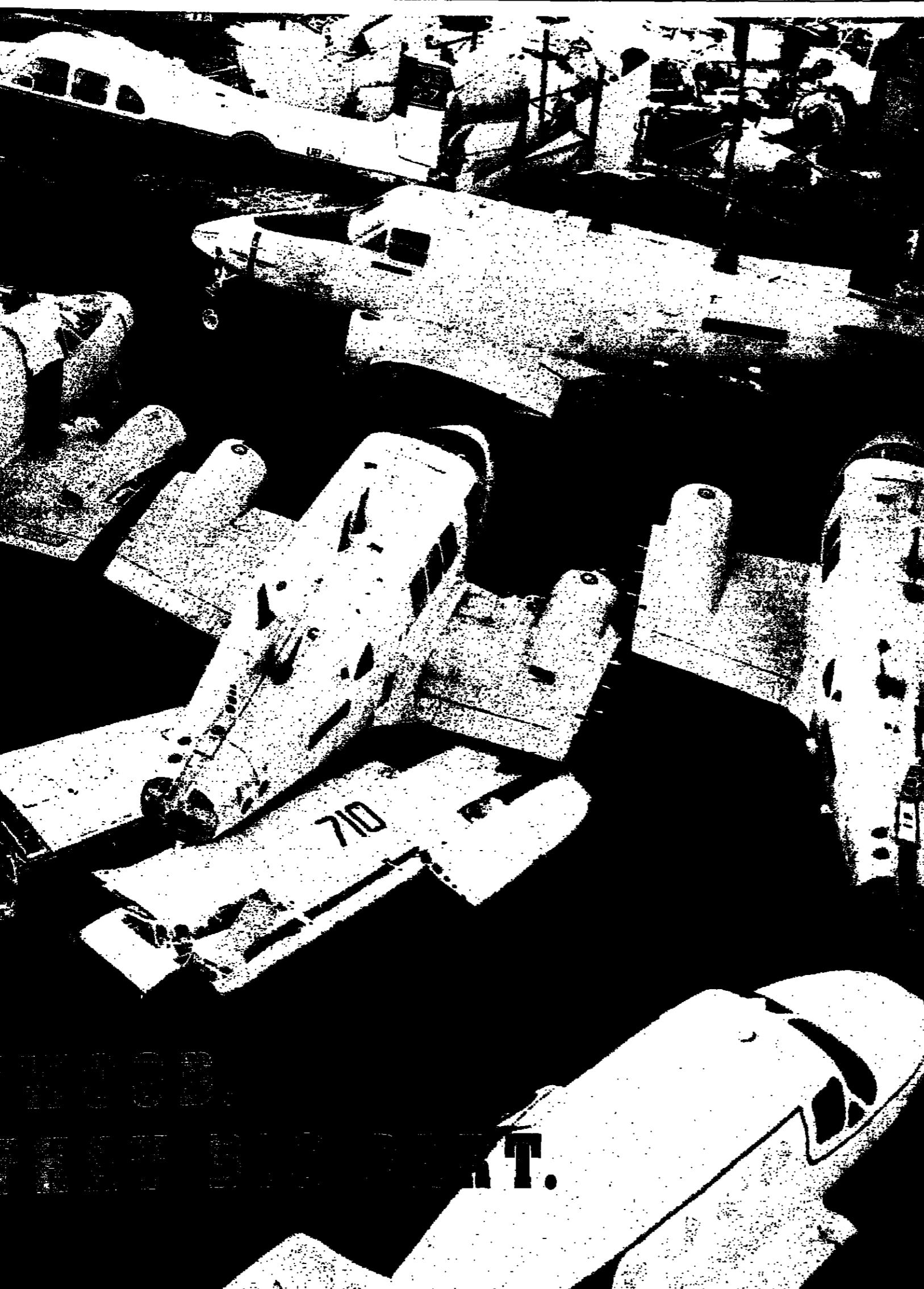
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Demonstrators in Bombay, advocating non-violent action against India's recent nuclear tests, protesting yesterday outside a meeting in the city addressed by the Defence Minister, George Fernandes, who argued that the tests were necessary as a defence against regional threats

Photograph: Savit Kirloskar/Reuters



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Pakistan weighs cost of avenging nuclear blast

By Peter Popham
in Islamabad

MY KARACHI taxi driver had just finished lambasting the driver of the large, spanking new BMW in front, one of those crooks in the army, he supposed, who grew rich by stealing from the population at large, when I asked him about India's nuclear test.

"India had five *amashas*," he said without a pause. "We must have six *amashas* and we must have them now!" A *amasha*, on both sides of the Indo-Pakistani border, means a bravura display, a dazzling exhibition. It is in these sorts of terms of sibling rivalry that India's nuclear

coup and the appropriate Pakistani response are discussed.

When enemies are intimately close and entwined in their histories as India and Pakistan, there is something deeply childish about it – though no less dangerous for all that.

More sophisticated voices take a more sombre line. A shop assistant in Islamabad said: "We must have a test. We only need one to block India. But we must have one."

There is, at times like this, an acute sense here of Pakistan being about one tenth the size of India, and the loser in each of the three post-independence wars.

It is in these sorts of terms of

tsined first. Government spokesmen strive to give the impression that their minds are open on the subject. Addressing a meeting of party workers in Lahore on Sunday, Prime Minister Sharif said: "The real thing is the possession of the capability. It is not necessary that it should be shown. Pakistan was in a position to demonstrate its capability twenty years ago, and it can demonstrate it today."

He went on to draw a distinction between India's "weak and unstable government", whose weakness had prompted it to carry out the tests, and the stability of Pakistan, where Mr Sharif rules with a major

majority.

His stability is, of course, aided by the absence of Benazir Bhutto, the leader of the Opposition, who is expected to be arrested on embezzlement charges if and when she returns to Pakistan from London. "BB" – as she is universally known – has been causing as much mischief as possible from the sidelines, urging the bombing of India's nuclear facilities and telling a Saudi newspaper that if Pakistan failed to respond in kind to the Indian test, India would launch a ground war in the disputed territory of Kashmir.

This is a possibility that is also being raised in India: it is suggested that the government may well be in a mood to score another triumph in the state where 600,000 Indian troops are stationed to control Pakistan and Afghan sponsored insurgency.

Among the triumphalism and paranoia a note of awful realism occasionally raises a small voice. On Sunday an Indian newspaper reported that more than a dozen people from the village of Khetolai, near the Indian test site, had reported symptoms of radiation sickness, including nose bleeds, loss of appetite and skin and eye irritation. Khetolai is one of several villages dotted around the nuclear site at Pokhran. India is currently demonstrating that the wellbeing of these peasants should be a very low priority.

Machel air crash to be investigated

CAPE TOWN (Reuters) — South Africa's truth commission said yesterday that it would hold an inquiry into the air crash in which Samora Machel, the Mozambican President, died in 1986, after new evidence emerged implicating the army.

Dumiso Nsebeza, head of investigations for the statutory Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), said in a statement that a closed investigative inquiry into the crash would be held on 4 June in Cape Town.

"The TRC has been presented with new evidence linking the crash with the activities of the former South African Defense Force," Mr Nsebeza said.

He said a former SADF military intelligence operative, two other ex-members of the SADF and a former Mozambican official had been invited to give evidence, but their identi-

ties were withheld because of fear for their safety.

Mr Machel – who led Mozambique to independence from Portugal in 1975 – and 33 others died in a plane crash over South Africa in October 1986.

Mozambique, then a close ally of the anti-apartheid movement, has never accepted the conclusion of an inquiry, chaired by South African Judge *Cecil Margo* in 1987, that pilot error caused the plane to crash.

The inquiry ignored evidence that Mr Machel's Soviet-built Tupolev jet was diverted from its correct flight path by a radio beacon transmitting on the same frequency as the one at Maputo airport, its destination.

The South African President, Nelson Mandela, who is companion to Mr Machel's widow, Graca, last year reopened an investigation into the case.

IN BRIEF

No way through for Arafat

A HASTILY arranged meeting in London between the US Secretary of State, Madeleine Albright, and the Palestinian leader, Yasser Arafat, failed to find a way through the impasse in the Middle East peace process. "We ... are working hard to overcome differences," a State Department spokesman said. Mrs Albright was more upbeat: "We had good, constructive talks." Mr Arafat said nothing as he left the Churchill Hotel.

— AP, London

Iranian moderates attacked

HARDLINERS attacked Iranian students supporting the moderate President Mohammad Khatami, the latest in a series of attacks by hardliners, who are widely believed to enjoy the support of powerful political forces.

— Reuters, Tehran

Yugoslav sanctions on hold

WESTERN nations agreed to ease sanctions on new investment in Yugoslavia after it agreed to open talks with ethnic Albanians on a political settlement to the crisis in Kosovo.

— Reuters, London

Five minutes in the starry life of John Travolta



ROSIE MILLARD

IT WAS WORSE than meeting the Queen. In fact, meeting John Travolta was rather more like checking out the Sun King at Versailles.

Travolta, star of Seventies pop musicals, disco king, chubby darling of *Pulp Fiction*, was at the Cannes Film Festival for his film *Primary Colours*. I was therefore offered an interview at his hotel on the Cap D'Antibes. In the old days, stars would stay in the middle of Cannes. Nowadays, only film financiers and jour-

nalists stay in town. Celebs breathe a more refined air. After all, they are treated as gods; obviously they must have their own Valhalla.

The hotel looks like a French château; but rather than putting up French bluebloods, it puts up with 20th-century aristos, i.e. film stars. Madonna stays here, Bruce Willis stays here, Hugh Grant and Liz Hurley check in from time to time. If you find yourself directing your taxi to the Hotel Du Cap, you know you've made it.

Arriving, we swept into the majestic entrance. A press person advanced, waving madly. We swept out of the majestic entrance and turned down something with potholes in it. The tradesman's entrance. By a large iron gate we were stopped by a young man who looked rather like Tom Parker-Bowles. "That's Tom Parker-Bowles," whispered my producer. I wasn't surprised. When you are viewed as royalty, you need the minions of royalty about you. Tom advised us to get out of our taxi and pointed up a long path, which wound through a sort of faux-wilderness.

On the way up we bumped into a Japanese film crew coming the other way. Their faces looked strangely beautiful. Clearly they had already had *The Meeting*. I came across an American woman sitting in the middle of the path on a dining-room chair. "Go up this path and turn left at the green wooden gate," she said. It

Rosie Millard is the BBC's arts correspondent.

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The secret of Hazel Lansdale's smile



Human tissue donated in the US for medical purposes is being used to give British women Pamela Anderson-style pouts. Beautiful? Perhaps. But safe...?

By Sarah Lonsdale

HAZEL LINDSAY touches her top lip self-consciously, smiles and stifles a giggle. "It feels strange," she says. "Like it's not my lip or something. I've had to learn to pronounce some words differently because some sounds come out almost lispy. But I'm really pleased, as is Ian."

Ian, Hazel's boyfriend, is so pleased with Hazel's new pout that he bought her not one, but three new lipsticks from L'Oréal: a bright red, a purple lilac, his favourite, and a brown. Hazel, a youthful 38, with attractive, nut-brown eyes has just purchased permanently putting new top lip at a cost of £1,500.

The permanent pout is a relatively new surgical procedure, using freeze-dried skin tissue from America. Before this new procedure became available, women wanting Pamela Anderson pouts had to undergo repeated collagen injections, which dissipate into the body after three months.

I first met Hazel just days before her operation, and then she was swimming over with excitement, rather like a child before a birthday. She explained, they why she wanted a proper pout and why she was so excited about it: "I have always had really thin lips, and they are also slightly uneven. I have tried to compensate by putting less of lipstick on, but I always end up going over the edges."

"I have wanted to do something about them for a long time now. Unless you have really thin lips, you can't understand perhaps, why anyone would actually want an operation to make them bigger, just like I suppose someone with a perfect figure can't understand a woman wanting liposuction or breast surgery. I looked at collagen injections, but they don't last, so the AlloDerm seems like my best option."

AlloDerm is sterilised, rehydrated skin tissue taken from human corpses and only available from one company based in the United States. The surgeon makes two incisions, on either side of the mouth, and threads the tissue under the surface of the lip, in a procedure lasting just a few minutes. The tissue, which fuses with the patient's own dermis, has been used for the last three years as a skin graft for burns treatment and for scar reconstruction. This is the tissue's first purely cosmetic use and in Britain only a handful of Harley St practitioners use it in this way. British plastic surgeons, such as Richard Downes, who inserted the material into Hazel's upper lip at his clinic at 103 Harley Street, purchase the material direct from the American manufacturers.

AlloDerm is freeze-dried skin tissue rendered inert by the removal of the cells, leaving a human tissue matrix made up from what is left - capillary

walls and collagen. Before rehydration in saline solution, AlloDerm looks like a sheet of off-white, thin, flexible cardboard.

Whereas in Britain it is illegal to trade in human body parts, the company which manufactures AlloDerm is licensed to sell the tissue to surgeons. The company, LifeCell, which is based in Texas, is aware of the potential for controversy that the use of donated tissue for cosmetic purposes provokes.

'I really like it, but I don't know how my boyfriend feels about kissing me yet, because my lips have been too swollen to kiss up until now'

"LifeCell has never promoted AlloDerm for lip augmentation," says Jane Lee Hicks, the company's product development manager. "We have a licence to promote the tissue as a skin graft for burns. Once the surgeons have purchased AlloDerm, we cannot stop them from using it for other purposes."

Ms Hicks admits that the use of AlloDerm in purely cosmetic procedures has opened up a grey area, but she argues that it is very difficult to define in plastic surgery what is

purely aesthetic and what is not. "Reconstructive surgery for cleft lip can use AlloDerm, and some people have such thin lips that they interfere with their speech patterns. Neither of these conditions is medically life-threatening, yet surely you would agree that they are suitable candidates for surgery using AlloDerm."

"Similarly, if someone does not like the look of their mouth and if that person becomes stronger and more confident by

plastic surgeons specialising in burns treatment here in Britain argue that they are not yet convinced of the tissue's safety and would therefore only use it in a medical emergency, rather than for a non-urgent cosmetic procedure. "I am not sure whether all the potential for virus transmission has been solved," says Mr Bill Dixon, consultant plastic surgeon specialising in burns at Morrison Hospital, in Swansea. "Where at all possible, I prefer to use skin grafts from donor sites on the patient."

Hazel Lansdale is not concerned about the provenance of her new lips. "It's not like they don't clean it or anything first. It's completely sterilised. They use it for burns, so it must be safe," she says.

John McGregor, a consultant plastic surgeon who specialises in facial surgery both within the NHS, at St John's Hospital in Livingston, and in private practice, has not used AlloDerm in treating either his private or NHS patients. "It is an expensive material to use for burns. As for something like lip augmentation, you might be prepared to donate some of your skin for a relative or for someone with serious life-threatening burns, but you might not be particularly happy if your skin is used to make someone's lips bigger," he says.

AlloDerm is derived from pieces of skin tissue, usually taken from the back or stomach, and LifeCell markets it in varying sizes, from 7cm by 7cm for large wounds, to 1cm squares for smaller procedures such as gum grafts. The tissue is sold for a sliding scale fee, starting at \$50 for a 1cm square, rising to \$400 for a 3cm by 7cm sheet.

Whereas AlloDerm costs

£34 per square centimetre, fresh frozen skin sold to burns units via NHS skin banks costs just 34 pence per square centimetre.

Jackie Sullivan, who runs the Surgical Advisory Service in Harley Street and who has arranged Hazel's operation, argues that AlloDerm is available commercially on the open market and no one is losing out.

"If there were a shortage of it, that would be another matter," she says.

After the operation, during which Hazel says she felt no pain at all, "just rather a pleasant sleeping feeling", her new top lip takes about two weeks to settle down and another week for an inflamed area, where she inadvertently tugged at her stitch, to heal. During this time she has applied antibiotic cream and Vaseline to her lips, to prevent infection.

Before the operation, Ian had been saying he was looking forward to Hazel looking like Pamela Anderson. Does she feel like Pamela now? Hazel demurs. "It's all very new. I really like it. So does Ian. I don't know how he feels about kissing me yet, because my lips have been too swollen to kiss up until now," she says.

"I'm very very happy with the Surgical Advisory Service, who arranged the operation for me and I'm already planning to have my facelift there, which Ian is giving me for my 45th birthday present."

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"I'm very very happy with the Surgical Advisory Service, who arranged the operation for me and I'm already planning to have my facelift there, which Ian is giving me for my 45th birthday present."



Hazel Lansdale before (above left) and after her lip augmentation operation

Photographs: Rui Xavier/Neville Elder

Did you hear about the speculum and the strawberry?



DR PHIL HAMMOND

guise. But I guess they thought he's a doctor, he must know what he's doing."

"And what did the other doctors think?"

"We weren't terribly amused. But he was the senior partner and they carried a lot of clout in those days. But eventually we had to let him go."

"And he stopped doing it?"

"Oh no. He moved to Halifax and set up on his own."

(Pause for wine.)

"I worked in Halifax."

"You poor sod."

"The patients were great. But the branch surgery didn't have a chair for them."

"You're kidding. When was this?"

"In 1981. There wasn't a couch either. The patients would come in expecting very little and go out with even less."

"We had a surgeon doing locums in our practice who wouldn't let the patients sit down. He used to wedge his foot under their chair so when they tried to pull it out, they couldn't."

"In my practice, they all get a seat."

"Yeah, but they can't get out of them. You should see his waiting room. Bloody great bucket seats that all the oldies get stuck in 'cause their hips are lower than their knees. They never get near a doctor."

"Rubbish."

"It's not rubbish. Tell me this, right. Why did you relocate your surgery up Barton Hill?"

"For the view."

"Bollocks. It's so all the really sick patients collapse half-way up and never make it to the front door."

(More wine.)

"So did you see the snooker?"

"In parts. I was on call. The first three houses had it on but the last had *Moll Flanders*."

"I hate it when that happens. Did you ask them to switch over?"

"Didn't need to. When *Moll* started shagging, they got all embarrassed."

"What, they don't want their doctor to know they watch *Songs of Praise* and soft porn on a Sunday?"

"Exactly. So on came John and Ken."

"Dr Kerwin saw it live."

"*Moll Flanders*?"

"No, the snooker. She's potty about it. Followed Higgins through every round."

"Is she still single?"

"Yeah. It might be something to do with the fact she keeps her uterus in a pot in the garage. It puts men off."

"I should imagine so."

(Even more wine.)

"Hey, you'll never guess what happened to our practice nurse."

"What?"

"She was doing a smear the other day, popped the speculum in and a strawberry fell out."

"You're kidding. What did she do?"

"Ignored it."

"That's amazing. I'd have pissed myself. Was it ripe?"

"Does it matter?"

"No. I guess in those situations you've just got to roll with it."

Contact lenses that can damage your eyes

Fashion-conscious teenagers are putting their sight at risk. By Jeremy Lonsdale

THEY can make your irises sparkle, change colour or disappear. You can choose stars or stripes or have tiny faces peering from behind your eyelashes. The windows to the soul have got the decorators in.

Cosmetic contact lenses with no optical power - are the newest thing on the dancefloor and the catwalk. The designer Alexander McQueen has featured them on his models and they are attracting a growing following. Like all fashion crazes, they come with their own health warning.

A loophole in the law means cosmetic contact lenses can be sold anywhere - across the counter, on market stalls or by mail order. There is no optical problem they

correct, so there is no need for an optician. This means that there is nobody to check that they fit properly, no inspection of the health of the eye and no advice on cleaning and maintenance.

Worse, easy access brings an easy-going attitude to their use. Teenagers are said to be swapping lenses to match their mood or outfit heedless of the risk of cross infection. Bugs present in one person's eye, which cause no problem, may flare up into a nasty infection when transferred into the different immunological environment of someone else's eye.

Theoretically there is even a risk that HIV could be transferred this way. The virus is transmitted in bodily fluids and



Popular with clubbers - but not with opticians

may be present in tears, although there are no recorded instances of infection by this route.

Consultant ophthalmologists fear that laxity in the supervision of contact lens-wearers will result in more infections which, though rare, can have deva-

tating consequences. About five in every 10,000 wearers of soft lenses, the most popular kind, require treatment each year, but this rises to 20 per 10,000 for extended-wear lenses which may be left in day and night for up to three months.

Infection and oxygen deprivation are the principal problems for contact lens-wearers.

The soft lenses cover most of the cornea (the transparent surface of the eye) preventing air getting to it. An ill-fitting lens can aggravate the problem of oxygen deprivation and in severe cases where the problem is prolonged, blood vessels can

grow into the cornea, interfering with vision. Hard lenses, which are smaller and sit over the pupil, have fewer problems with oxygen deprivation and lower infection rates, because less of the eye is covered.

Professor Roger Buckley, chairman of the contact lens committee of the General Optical Council said: "We know they can be just as harmful to the eye as ordinary contact lenses, but the risks are greater because they are not fitted and no instruction is given in cleaning and maintenance."

Handling lenses with dirty hands and failing to clean them properly is the quickest way to guarantee an infection. All the usual suspect bugs are capable of doing damage - *staphylococcus, pneumococcus, pseudomonas*. One of the most serious is *acanthamoeba keratitis* which causes scarring of the cornea and can result in the need for a corneal graft.

The bigger the surface of the eye that is covered by the lens, the easier it is for protein to build up on it, forming a biofilm

in which bugs can thrive. The best defence against infection, therefore, is frequent cleaning and replacement of lenses.

David Gatty, consultant ophthalmologist at Moorfields Eye hospital, in London, said: "Acanthamoeba infections have become more prevalent over the past 15 years. It is a bug that forms cysts which are very resistant to being killed, so it is ubiquitous - in taps, shower heads and swimming pools. Cleaning and replacing lenses is essential. Swapping them is an awful thing to do."

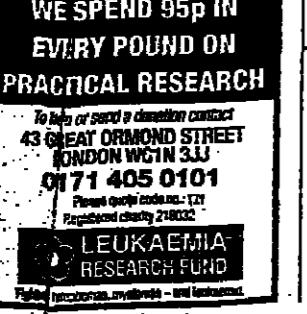
Doctors and opticians are concerned about the growth of mail-order sales of contact lenses, whether cosmetic or conventional, which reduce the likelihood of customers' eyes being checked and the right advice given. One mail-order firm, Vision Direct, was successfully prosecuted by the General Optical Council this month for failing to provide proper supervision of the sale of the lenses by an optician.

Mr Gatty said: "I am horrified by the idea of selling a medical appliance by mail order. Patients may end up in casualty if they are not followed up."

Sweet Sounds For Summer



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A single parent with 30 children

Julie Carter thought taking a gang of street kids under her wing was a good move. Not everyone in Grimsby agrees. By Susan de Muth

THERE is washing, drying everywhere you turn in Julie Carter's tiny flat in Grimsby. "We've been camping in the country," she explains, "and we all got covered in mud." Julie has taken in five homeless teenagers to live with her and her own son, 14-year-old Eliot. Sometimes she even erects a tent in her back garden to accommodate extra visitors.

In her living-room, 23 more children aged between 12 and 17 jostle for space on the sofa, perch on the arms or settle for the floor. They come here every day after school and at weekends. The type of kids most people shun: members of a street gang which has often been in trouble with the law, many have drug, alcohol or psychological problems. They are a noisy bunch, too, shouting to be heard over a jungle beat not many 42-year-olds could stomach.

But Julie Carter is no ordinary 42-year-old. Tired of seeing these kids hanging round on street corners with nowhere to go, provoking the residents, intimidating local businesses and getting moved on by the police, she opened her doors to them eight weeks ago.

With her fluffy hair, big eyes, talk of the "power of love" and the unvarying tone of quiet respect with which she addresses these rowdy teenagers, she seems at the very least naive, yet the kids turn down the music when she asks them to and, passing round a talking stick, take it in orderly turns to speak.

"Julie's like a mum to me," says 16-year-old Lisa, whose

round cheeks have an unhealthy grey pallor. "She really helps. I've been living here for a week and have started to come off the drugs. I have been taking speed and coke since I was 13 - a dealer first gave them to me in exchange for me carrying heroin for him in my school bag."

"Julie listens to me," says Lou. "She's given me back some hope in life. Everyone's been telling me I'm bad since I can remember ... school, my parents ... they said I'd never even get a job, but Julie's already arranged some work experience for me a printer's."

A chubby 12-year-old describes how many of the gang, some as young as six or seven, were drinking alcohol on a regular basis before Julie invited them in for tea. "We'd be out on the street 'till 11 or 12 at night," he says, puffing on a sodden roll-up proffered by an older child. "They've closed down all the youth clubs near here and you get really bored. The older kids buy booze for the younger ones, it's cheaper than drugs, but if we got some dope or pills, we'd do them, too."

Daily life at Julie's flat is an endless round of washing, cooking, cleaning and cups of tea. The kids share the chores and, though money is tight, those who have homes bring food parcels for those who don't. The group has established a list of rules which are tacked to the back of a door.

Julie is the first to acknowledge that she has no qualifications for her self-appointed



Julie Carter and her house guests (above). Many have been in trouble with the law or have drug problems. Now, they crowd into her home (below). (Photographs: Susan de Muth)

duties as house mother and counsellor but feels her own history gives her an insight and understanding that childcare professionals often lack. "I've been involved in prostitution, theft and self-mutilation," she admits. "When I was 21, I tried to kill myself but I dragged myself out of the gutter, literally, and made a good life for myself and Eliot."

"I can see the potential in these children that everyone's rejecting - they're bloody beautiful kids and I want to help them realise that. When I talk to them I try to rebuild their self-esteem. Things like the camping weekend bond us as a group."

Since Julie opened her doors the group have experienced some major dramas including a heroin overdose and two attempted suicides. Eliot, who has been home-educated by Julie since he was 11, is remarkably unfazed by the

changes in his domestic circumstances. "It's a bit stressful at times," he concedes, "but mum consulted me before she did this and I agree with her. The most I've ever shared my room with is eight - we sometimes let extra people stay over in a crisis, then help them sort things out with their families the next day. Pets are welcome, too. At the moment, a rat and two mice are residing in Eliot's bedroom. 'They're often the only thing a child has got to love,' Julie says.

Julie currently has a 15-year-old runaway staying with her. "He was sleeping out in a garage," she says. "I've asked social services to come and take him to a safe house but in two weeks nothing has happened. The police have told me it is illegal to have a child under 16 staying with me without parental consent, but what can I do? There are pushers, pimps and paedophiles out there and

if I know that there is no way a kid is going home I want to give him shelter."

Tales of sexual, emotional and physical abuse by their families are common among Julie's "guests" but sometimes they are simply no longer welcome at home. "My mum and stepdad say they can't cope with

me any more," says Lou. "They don't care where I am so long as I am not bothering them. They've got three other children now and mum's glad I've come to live with Julie."

The local authority is not impressed, maintaining that Julie's actions are "causing fragmentation within families".

Their approach would be to mediate between the youngsters and their families in the hope of reconciliation. "Mrs Carter does not, in most cases, have the consent of these young people's parents for them living with her," said a spokesman. "She is also causing overcrowding."

Julie's neighbours are also opposed to her brand of philanthropy and she has been physically threatened. A middle-aged couple, who declined giving their names, organised a meeting recently which was attended by about 20 irate residents.

"These are the same kids who were hanging round damaging cars and being abusive," said one. "Why should we back a project to help them?" Residents are also worried that any sort of "hostel-type" situation in the area would lower the value of their houses.

Julie, meanwhile, is aware of the need to establish a more of-

ficial base for her project and would welcome the involvement of the authorities. Together with a "core group" of enthusiastic children she has established an organisation called SOS 2000. The aim to acquire a large building in the area where they currently use a youth club and a hotel for homeless young people. The teenagers have generated all the publicity materials themselves and are washing cars and walking dogs to bring in funds.

SOS 2000 already as the support of local MP Austin Mitchell and several local businesses have offered sponsorship when it is up and running. "It's a race against time," says Julie. "I obviously can't operate from my flat indefinitely. But if I can't back it will happen to these young people. What will happen to the little hope they have got if yet another admires them down?"

Some names have been changed.

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REVELATIONS

The time: 1967
The place: High Wycombe
The man: Terry Pratchett, author

I DON'T remember making a coherent decision but always knew I would make a living with words. I was a fairly bookish but bright enough to know that it would be foolish to assume that I could pay the bills that way; at that time the number of people in the UK making a success out of writing science fiction could be numbered on the fingers of one hand after a bad industrial accident.

Journalism was rather unfashionable and as we did not have "the media", there were few jobs on offer. The classic way was starting on the *Pig Feed Advertiser* and working your way up. However, being quite good at quick writing, I decided it was my best option. So at 17 I sent a letter off to the editor of the local paper informing him that I hoped to leave school next year, with three A levels, and asking if there would be a job going. He wrote back that he didn't know about next year but he had one right now.

It would have been nice if the *Bucks Free Press* had been in a grand office with oak paneling, but it was a fairly nondescript Sixties high-rise, though the phrase hardly applies in High Wycombe, it probably had five or six storeys. The editorial offices were at the top, with the front office downstairs, next door to a Chinese restaurant. But it took me all of 0.5 seconds to decide not to finish my education and leave a year early. I hated school, it was the Sixties after all - although in High Wycombe we were having the 1950s reheated. My parents were supportive: after all, the paper was one of the pillars of the local community.

As a trainee on £8.50 a week, I worked incredibly hard. Anyone who aspired to practically anything in South



Terry Pratchett: Learnt his craft in the newsroom of his local paper

of the estate are not going to be "up in arms" until you've phoned them up. Life became a series of clichés because it is a series of clichés. I finally found that I knew how to do this - there was no more fear. The revelation was that here was something that I was good at. I hadn't had many opportunities before. For years I had struggled with maths and school work. By the time my school friends were leaving university, I was inordinately proud of not only feeling competent with the English language, but proven competent - people were paying me money every week to continue.

On a local newspaper there is a complicity between the writer and the reader. Both of you take for granted that High Wycombe, for example, is an important place and the centre of the universe. You learn that the reader is an integral part of the process. We had some first-class photos of the Earth taken from the moon during one of the Apollo missions. Westminster Press, which owned us, sent down an order to use them before everybody else. There were important local stories that had to be moved off the front page, but the editor, Arthur Church, came up with what we considered a marvelous Solomon-like judgement: I suppose the moon shines on High Wycombe just like everywhere else.

There is probably a similarity between Discworld, the setting for my books, and High Wycombe, although the second does have an independent existence just off the M4. Both sets of readers are taken into a world about which they have a lot of background knowledge. Discworld started, and became successful, because I took a variation on the classic post-Tolkienian fantasy universe but wrote it as if I was on the local paper. Or perhaps, I'm still reporting on the real world through Discworld. A reviewer who wanted to be critical of my books claimed they encourage a cosy mindset between the writer and reader. I thought I could live with that.

Writing for local newspapers made me very disciplined, I'm used to turning in my copy on time. The *Bucks Free Press* burnt out any desire to believe that writing was something you did whether the muse caught you, otherwise there would be a large hole on page 3. There was no theory of journalism, like the teach today, the only theory was: could we have 400 words by 3.30pm. What's more, I discovered things I would have never learnt on a literature course: a word that is not read is a word that is not worth writing. It has now become part of my psyche. I am fairly superstitious - I will start a new book within a week of finishing the old one. Although much of it will probably never see the light of day, I've dug a small furrow in the next field. A bit like local journalism if you're not writing something you don't exist - you're just some berk hanging around.

A journalist makes himself invisible because we're told it is the facts that matter. My amused detached ironic tone of voice, which has been one of the keys to British humorous writing for the last 100 years, most probably comes from the same source.

In the next book, which I'm working on, I bring back a character, Agnes Nutt, who is a fat witch. When she was a child she had an invisible friend; although now older, she still she has this companion who is now more of an invisible enemy - the thin girl inside every fat girl - who comments on everything she does. I've always assumed that everybody has their own internal editor, who looks over their shoulder and comments and stands back dispassionately even at moments of supreme joy. I've become aware that I'm a natural observer and I suppose that's why I feel at home in the newsroom - and there was always an editor on duty.

Terry Pratchett's latest Discworld novel, 'The Last Continent', is published by Doubleday at £16.99.

Interview by Andrew G Marshall

BIRTHS
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Private decisions on public funds

DECISIONS are being taken – today, tomorrow, over the next few weeks – which affect not only the way government will impact on the people of Britain in the early years of the new century but the very identity of Tony Blair's administration. They are part of the so-called Comprehensive Spending Review which was announced by the Treasury last July and is intended to produce, this July, a programmatic statement on the size and distribution of public spending over the rest of this parliament. That will give us the sharpest picture to date of what New Labour stands for.

But those decisions are being taken in private. They are being taken, often, with minimal input from the public which pays the taxes on which the spending depends. Departments are arguing with the Treasury about candle ends here, pennies there, while the big questions – like whether we even need certain departments – go unasked, let alone unanswered.

It is a symbol of that directionlessness – the sense that the Blair administration has no clear idea of what kind of state it thinks Britain should have – that in parallel with the Treasury spending review, but apparently unconnected with it, the new Cabinet Secretary, Sir Richard Wilson, should have been compiling a great (secret) report on "the centre" and the kind of powers the Prime Minister needs if he is to shape our collective future.

The review process started out promisingly. The Treasury announced terms of reference. Ministers considered taking their case to the country, seeking to involve the public in the big principles. Some did just that: Harriet Harman and Frank Field have, by accident as well as design, succeeded in informing the public about what social security spending is meant to accomplish. The Ministry of Defence made an effort, holding seminars attended by heretofore garrulous generals and top officials (though, sadly, very few press or public). But that was last autumn. Since, we seem to have fallen back into a round of bilateral conflicts which the public finds out about thanks to occasional leaks accompanied by the frenetic waving of bloody stumps. As we report today, the Prime Minister – ignoring his own injunctions about taking the strategic view – has been intervening energetically on the MoD's behalf, just like Margaret Thatcher used to.

The Blair government has, to give it credit, been much less paranoid than its predecessor about sharing information with the public. But it seems not to have registered a profound point. People's willingness to support government financially – to pay taxes – is directly related to their knowledge of what their government does. This spending review was an occasion to secure their fiscal assent – and their agreement to something this government is supposed to hold dear, the switch of national resources to areas such as schooling and social exclusion. It is a missed opportunity New Labour may sorely regret.

A thousand reasons to wind up Diana charity

LAST NIGHT, on *Panorama*, the acting chairman of the Diana Memorial Fund, Anthony Julius, was still defending the official use of Diana's name to promote tubs of margarine. To him, it was a choice between that and depriving cancer patients, the homeless and leprosy victims. "For me it's not a decision that takes more than a second to reach."

But if Mr Julius and the other trustees spent a little more time pondering the impact of their decisions they would quickly come to the conclusion that the marketing of Di is a self-defeating project.

The Diana charity has funds that will soon exceed £200m. This is a sizeable sum, and, one would think, more than enough to be getting along with. But the Trustees have taken it upon themselves to raise still more from merchandising. Hence the tubs of margarine. Hence the first toy to be endorsed by the trustees – a 9in tall "Princess" bear, which comes with a sugary and embarrassing verse describing Diana as an angel. There are said to be a further 1,000 money-making proposals awaiting consideration, all, no doubt, equally dreadful. With rare exceptions, the memory of Diana is simply not amenable to this kind of marketing. It is not the same as selling the *Teletubbies* or *Manchester United*. Any product that exploits Diana's memory will almost inevitably fall on the wrong side of good taste, end up offending people, and so damage the very causes which are supposed to be the beneficiaries.

The Trustees should recognise that this kind of cringe-making marketing should be left to the professional tat-mongers who make Diana's name in "posable, lifelike vinyl". They would be better advised to disburse the existing funds gradually to charities the Princess was known to be fond of, who will make excellent use of the money. For the sake of Diana's memory and, for what it is worth, the dignity of the monarchy, the Trustees should follow Earl Spencer's original advice and wind the fund up by the end of the year.

A mug's game

THE LATEST in the line of big winners turning into big and unhappy losers is Gary Ashmore. He won £1.0m on the National Lottery last June and is now an alcoholic. The good news is that he is beating his addiction – "It would be ironic if winning the lottery killed me". The bad news is that the Lottery damages more lives in small unreported episodes every week. The Lottery can be addictive. The poor spend a disproportionate part of their income on it. For some, their pension scheme is limited to picking six numbers in the newsagent's. The meretricious charms of the lottery gene are never going to go back into the bottle. As ministers pursue policies to get people out of poverty they should think about why so many of the poorest think that a flutter with odds of 1 in 13,983,816 is their best pathway to prosperity.



MILES
KINGTON

PROBABLY the last record produced by the late, great Ronnie Scott was entitled "Never Pat a Burning Dog". Whether he knew it or not, this title was an Albanian proverb.

As regular readers will know, I am a great fan of Albanian proverbs, and I am bringing you another selection today. Albanian proverbs are rather different from ours. Ours tend to be rather practical and bad-tempered ("It's no use crying over spilt milk", for instance, or "Too many cooks spoil the broth") while Albanian proverbs are not in the least grumpy or reprobating. They are not in the least practical, either – they sound like great truths at first sight, but on closer inspection turn out to be totally meaningless. Or do they ... ?

Anyway, let's stop thinking and start talking. (Which is actually also a genuine Albanian proverb.)

Nobody ever saw a rookery built on telegraph poles.

All hymns have happy endings.

The art of the toastmaster: To exercise absolute power while pretending to be everyone's servant.

Why are men expected to leave the seat down but women not expected to leave the seat up?

Never have your back to the sunset unless you are waiting for the sunrise.

It was a historic day when man first

went to the Moon, but not so historic as the day when he decided to give up going there.

A country with fewer than twelve scenic spots would be well advised not to produce its own calendar.

There are still such things as nursery rhymes, but no such things as nurseries. Perhaps the class system is fading after all.

If dock leaves really could cure nettle stings, one of the big pharmaceutical companies would have bottled it for sale by now.

Three things to avoid: yesterday's Sunday paper, envelopes saying You May Have Won \$3,000,000, and medicine in the bathroom

which you don't remember buying.

In most parts of the world gunmen sometimes murder innocent children, but only in Arkansas do innocent children murder innocent children. What the world needs now is a place where innocent children murder gunmen.

Three things to avoid: politicians' memoirs, things that arrive in brown envelopes and restaurants with cobwebs on the menus.

National anthems are never written by the kings and queens they celebrate. They just sound as if they are.

A woman who likes the sight of a man dressed only in socks has a very happy love life ahead of her.

Nobody ever played at Wimbledon dressed in black.

However good a king is, he is still only an amateur.

When studying a menu, never choose the dish with the most ingredients, unless you are very hungry; never choose the dish that mother used to make; never choose your own favourite dish; never choose something completely unknown; and never choose the same dish as your partner chooses. From the few dishes you have not eliminated, you can now choose one in the serene knowledge that it will lead to mild disappointment.

Nobody loves a capital city except

foreign visitors.

If you ever go back in time using a time machine, do not start your journey on the twentieth floor of a modern apartment block.

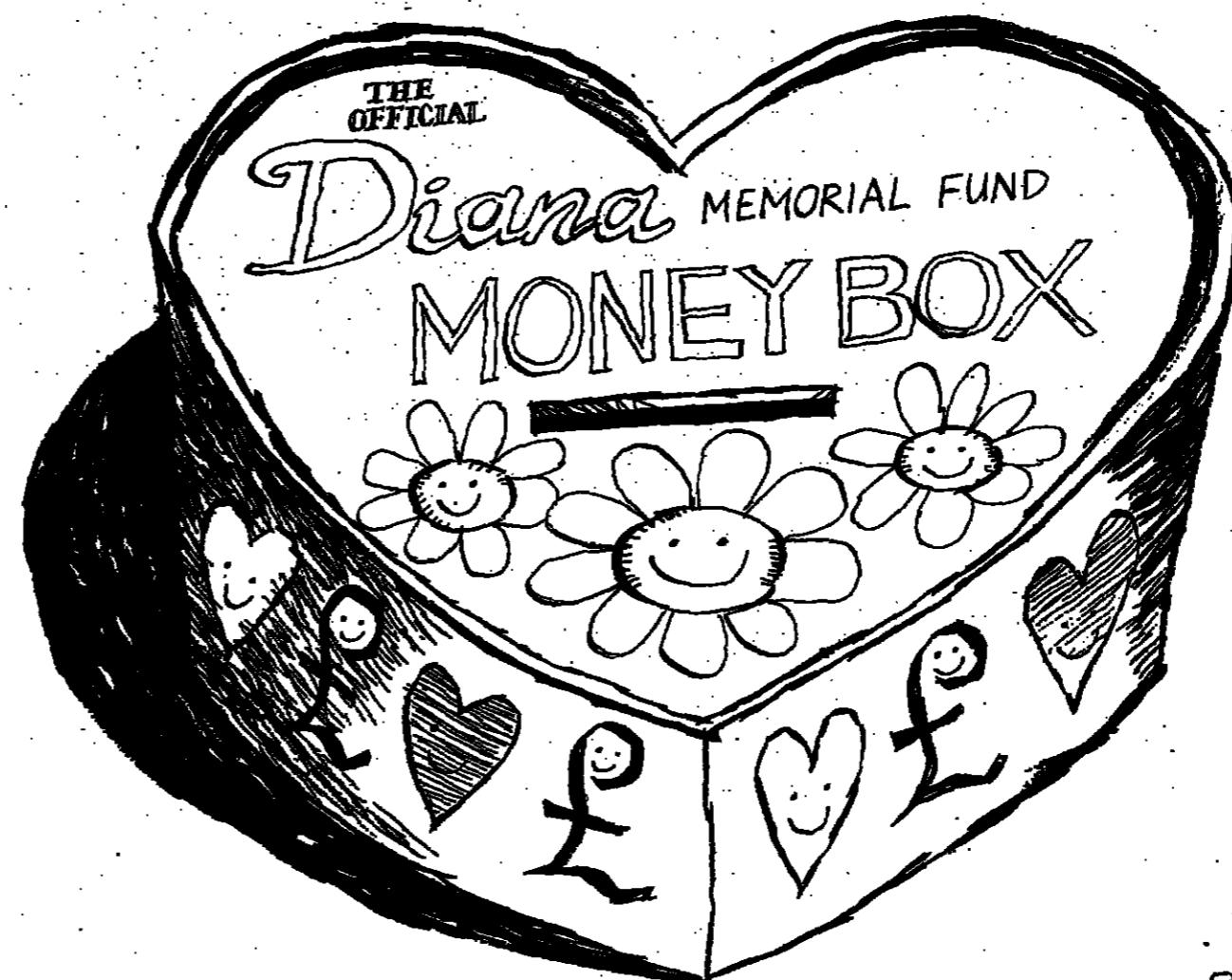
Three things to avoid: a chatty clergyman, a woman holding two drinks, and anything that falls out of a newspaper.

From mighty acorns tiny oak trees grow.

Pimples must get very embarrassed by some of the unsightly teenagers who are inflicted on them.

All these quotations taken from the Great Book of Albanian Proverbs, 1998 edition.

QUEEN OF ALL OUR CASH...



PRIESTLEY

Ulster peace in peril

Sir: As one who is originally from Northern Ireland, now living in England, I am becoming increasingly sceptical of the ability of the recent peace agreement to actually deliver peace or anything approaching it. I believe the whole debate about ending violence in Northern Ireland has been premised on the wrong terms.

What many people do not realise is that thirty years of conflict – plus the annual £5.4bn subvention from the British taxpayer – have resulted in an extremely comfortable standard of living for many people.

It has been estimated by a sociologist at Queen's University that 25 per cent of all jobs in Northern Ireland are either directly or indirectly related to the security situation, with one in ten of all adult Protestant males directly employed in a security related capacity – the RUC, the Northern Ireland Prison Service and so on. In effect, the Northern Ireland economy is a "war economy". There is also the added bonus of a health and social welfare system that has avoided the waiting-lists and cuts experienced elsewhere, good schools, cheap housing and one of the lowest rates of recorded crime in Western Europe. In economic and social terms Belfast has "never had it so good".

A "Yes" vote in this week's referendum is looking unlikely for the very reason that most Unionists are content enough with the way things are. What the Government needs to spell out to Unionists is the costs of a "No" vote. If the British public are happy enough to subsidise the lifestyle of Northern Ireland's middle classes that is their business. However, what they are also likely to have to put up with is an escalation of the IRA's bombing campaign in Britain.

Forty years ago Britain tested hydrogen bombs, not underground but in the open air of Christmas Island.

Whatever the official motive, the underlying one seems to have been the same as India's today: national pride. The new lad is seen as sad. Men lack decent role models. Women have many to aspire to.

This could be viewed as acceptable revenge after centuries of sexual inequality. But the youth of 1998 are not to blame for the male chauvinist pigs of yesteryear. The shift in attitudes has been accomplished, so why can't we leave it at that?

Inequality still exists (especially beyond the Western world). Moore's strategy is the test constructive way to deal with it. She says: "I've got better things to do than to be positive about male sexuality." Let's hope that she can find better things to than be eternally critical of it.

I hope my generation does not take the easy option. A matriarchy is no better than a patriarchy. Everyone should be accepted and appreciated for their full worth as human beings.

RICKY MILNES, Faringdon, Oxfordshire

Sir: Your report "Britain's fifth-richest woman turns screw on tenants" (18 May) puts an outrageous emphasis on the fact that the landlord is a woman, and the clear implication is that women, even in big business, are supposed to be intrinsically kinder than this. A woman who puts market forces ahead of her social conscience seems to be new in itself.

Plainly we should disapprove of disregard for tenants. But what on earth does that have to do with the sex of the landlord? Deconstructing your argument is not difficult – her crime may be greed, but her real crime is to be a greedy woman.

POLLY CLARK, Oxford

Sir: It came as no surprise to me that in your account of the conversation between your two protagonists in the sex war, David Aaronovitch and Suzanne Moore, it was the woman who had the last word.

PAUL DIBBENS, Shipston on Stour, Warwickshire

Sir: Whenever a minority finds itself in possession of some architectural gem, whether it be a house or a cathedral (letter, 16 May), that they no longer wish to bear the cost of maintaining, it suddenly becomes our heritage, although they still wish to remain in full occupancy.

Let the cathedrals become state property, given over to English Heritage to manage. They could be let out for suitable private functions, such as religious services, on a cost basis.

M GODDARD UNSWORTH, Sproxton, Leicestershire

LETTERS

Post letters to Letters to the Editor and include a daytime telephone number Fax 0171 293 2056; e-mail: letters@independent.co.uk E-mail correspondents are asked to give a postal address. Letters may be edited for length and clarity.

reflect that Great Britain is the only country on earth which has either the money or the inclination to support Ulster. We can say "No" as well.

A COHEN, Woking, Surrey

India's bomb tests

Sir: India's founding fathers led the world in moral rectitude. Their successors desecrate the memory of Mahatma Gandhi and Pandit Nehru by reducing India from a first-class moral power to a fifth-class nuclear one. There seems to be negligible opposition. We read of dancing in the streets of New Delhi.

Forty years ago Britain tested hydrogen bombs, not underground but in the open air of Christmas Island.

Whatever the official motive, the underlying one seems to have been the same as India's today: national pride. We could give the world a lead and perhaps stop the dangerous "me too" proliferation, if we disposed of our

entire nuclear arsenal now, in the most public and ostentatious way possible. Since the whole point of these terrible weapons is making gestures, Britain is now in a strong position finally to use its nuclear bombs – by unilaterally decommissioning them.

RICHARD DAWKINS, Oxford

Battle of the sexes

Sir: What does it achieve to denounce all aspects of masculinity as pathetic (Suzanne Moore, "Sex war", 16 May)? I am 17. I cannot speak for the whole of womanhood, but my view is that the obstacles to be faced have not been placed there by a male conspiracy. Our society and culture are currently putting forward an extremely positive view of women. The new lad is seen as sad. Men lack decent role models. Women have many to aspire to.

This could be viewed as acceptable revenge after centuries of sexual inequality. But the youth of 1998 are not to blame for the male chauvinist pigs of yesteryear. The shift in attitudes has been accomplished, so why can't we leave it at that?

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M GODDARD UNSWORTH, Sproxton, Leicestershire

Sir: Your leading article on Indonesia (15 May) deplores the failure of the West to "dislodge" President Suharto. Shades of Kennedy in South Vietnam or Nixon in Cambodia. Or was this a job that should have been put Sandline's way?

Western intervention is not going to get rid of rulers in Asia. That is done by the people of the country, as shown in Thailand and South Korea – and now perhaps in Indonesia. Unless, of course, one takes the view that the IMF rescue package was subtlety designed to produce the current upheaval and so force Suharto out.

JONATHAN FENBY, Hong Kong

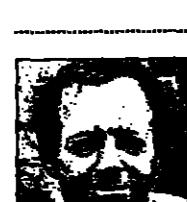
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The Albanian angle on time travel, restaurant menus and men in socks



MILES
KINGTON

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The campaign for Third World debt relief is counter-productive



ANDREAS WHITTAM SMITH

AS AN OBJECTIVE, relieving the poorest nations of their debt burden by the millennium is laudable. Such an outcome would indeed reduce misery and malnutrition for hundreds of millions of people otherwise living without hope of a decent life. What I question is not the aim of the Jubilee 2000 campaign launched at the Birmingham economic summit by a coalition of 70 aid agencies, trades unions and churches, but the means. *Thus far*, the campaign appears to be badly conceived. As political action it is likely to be ineffectual – as it was at Birmingham – if not counter-productive.

Politics is language as well as action. The first clue that something was wrong with the campaign was the statement made by a spokesperson for Oxfam last week. She said: "Failure to remove the debt burden in Africa is a violation of child rights." Well, I suppose it is something to have crammed into a 14-word sentence five words with emotional punch – failure, burden, violation, child, rights.

But implicit in the comment is a paradox: that the lenders rather than the borrowers are at fault. There may be something to be said for this argument, but that is not the point. You cannot conduct an effective political campaign on the basis of a paradox. A paradox generates doubts in listeners' minds.

More striking still is the assertion that child rights are being violated. The spokesperson described the actions of rich countries in terms of the most despicable act anyone can think of, short of murder. Remember that when people hear of a violation of children's rights, often it is in the context of paedophilia. And on what is this monstrous association of ideas based? On the truism that every dollar spent on debt repayments could instead have been used for primary education or public health facilities.

In a final, brilliant flourish the Oxfam executive added: "The primary responsibility for these ongoing violations rests with countries such as Germany, Japan and Italy... who have sought collectively to delay and diminish the debt relief." Note the repeated use of the word "violations". I suppose it is pure coincidence that these are the three countries against whom the Second World War was fought.

A second sign that the campaign is misconceived was on display at the Jubilee 2000 meeting in Birmingham at which Clare Short, the sympathetic Secretary of State for International Development, was the main speaker. Unfortunately, as was plain from Paul Vollely's eloquent report in yesterday's paper, the audience received a mixed message. Every time Ed Mayo, Jubilee 2000's chairman, made a point, Clare Short rose to her feet to rebut him. This is bad politics for the campaign.

Instead of paradox, monstrous accusation and mixed messages, a successful campaign

demands a clear, unsurprising, persuasive objective founded upon unambiguous facts. "Cancel the debts of poor countries" would do – except that, in fact, debt cancellation has been going on for many years.

As long ago as 1988, the Paris Club, the group that represents the main lenders, agreed to cut the debt burdens of the most severely affected countries by 33 per cent. Three years later this was raised to 50 per cent, then to 67 per cent in 1994. In total, the Paris Club has reduced or rescheduled \$300bn worth of debt over the past two decades. Oxfam does not need to resort to violent language because it does not have a revolutionary idea to try to get across: the principle of debt cancellation has long been accepted.

Try a second formulation: "Rich countries must stop impoverishing poor countries." But this won't do either. It is not true that highly indebted poor countries as a group, because of their need to repay loans, are losing more resources by way of interest and debt payments than they are gaining by other routes. Quite the reverse. The figures collected by the World Bank suggest that this group of mainly African countries situated south of the Sahara desert has been benefiting from net inflows equivalent to about 7 per cent of their national output for the past 15 years.

How about: "Make special arrangements for the debts of the poorest countries." Indeed, but this precisely what was agreed by the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the leading creditor countries in 1996. All creditors agreed to reduce the debt burden to sustainable levels – 20 to 25 per cent of export earnings. But to be assessed for relief a country has to stick to a rigorous programme of IMF economic reforms for three years. And even after that the probation period is not over. The debtor country still has to undergo another three years of the IMF programme before actually benefiting from debt reduction.

Now Jubilee 2000 quite reasonably says this

If you are driven to use extreme language... ministers stop listening

approach is insufficient. It still leaves countries repaying too much debt and the process of amelioration is taking too long. Stop there. That is precisely what the discussions between creditor nations, highly indebted poor countries and the World Bank and IMF are about.

There must be conditions, otherwise the foreign exchange saved by debt relief might end up in the Swiss bank accounts of dictators and their families, or be spent on arms purchases or on prestigious, white-elephant projects. The question is how generous to make the conditions. This, I contend, is the stuff of intricate negotiations.

If you make a campaign out of it, then you are driven to use extreme language, or twist the facts far from the truth. Then the very people you want to influence, the ministers and officials of the rich democracies, stop listening to you. That is what happened in Birmingham. Debt relief wasn't even mentioned in the official communiqué, only in a statement by the British Prime Minister in his role as host.

These riots and killings show why I wanted to sell tanks to Suharto

Richard Needham, ex-trade minister, explains why he watched the burning of Jakarta with such sorrow

I have a long attachment to Indonesia. My wife spent much of her childhood there and my parents-in-law lived and worked there for over thirty years. My children were brought up by Indonesians and we looked after an Indonesian boy. I have an Indonesian godson.

I have been visiting Indonesia for over 20 years, and since leaving politics I have become involved with several British companies who either have investments there or wish to develop the market.

These were the reasons why, last Thursday, I found myself watching from the 21st floor of Jakarta's Mandarin Oriental Hotel as the City was put to the torch and with it the dreams of 200 million people.

Ever since 1965 when Sukarno was overthrown, I had hesitantly, then with increasing conviction, believed that Indonesia would become the foremost of Asian Tigers. As Minister of Trade I had raised Indonesia's profile as a country to invest in. Even the careful, canny Marks and Spencer had set up shop.

Of course, in a nation so huge and so poor there were always bound to be doubts. The anti-Chinese riots in 1965, the massacre of 500,000 so-called Indonesian Communists and Indonesia's behaviour in East Timor showed how quickly violence and ethnic division could erupt.

One of the grounds on which I had argued as trade Minister for the supply of Scorpion tanks was that, at some time, they might be required to protect the Chinese community – an argument that would no doubt have been raised on Robin Cook's deaf ears.

At first light last Friday, as the fountain's played and the neon signs winked, the Scorpion tanks rolled in Glodok, Jakarta's Chinatown, but as with everything that has happened in Indonesia recently, they were too late. Glodok had been destroyed, and the Chinese community on whom so much of Indonesia's success and wealth relies, were heading in their thousands for Sukarno Hatta airport.



The ruins of Glodok, Jakarta's Chinatown, after last Thursday's riots. Photograph: AP

The previous evening we had driven round the city. It was surreal. Some buildings were aglow with floodlighting and advertising. The President's Palace awaiting its return, its balcony strung with huge, gilded Louis XVI chandeliers, was surrounded by a ring of tanks.

Nearby pathetic knots of the well-to-do were manning patriotic barricades across well-to-do streets, anxiously waiting for the gangs to return. Neighbourhood Watch was not designed to cope with civil war. In Glodok there was the dreadful smell of deathly incineration, at every intersection groups of soldiers were huddled beside their shields and rifles.

The centre of one of Asia's greatest cities had become a desert. The looters were enjoying their loot, the rest had fled. For many that afternoon, it had taken three to four hours to drive home. A friend living in an apartment over a brand new shopping centre had watched terrified as boutiques, jewellers and a food hall were ransacked and burnt immediately beneath

the excesses of his children could be tolerated as long as the lot of the majority was improving. But now almost everyone I met claimed that he must take the responsibility for the catastrophe. Businessmen privately point to the bumbling and fumbling over the IMF packages, to the ludicrous appointments in his new government, to the incompetence and corruption of his administration. Since the death of his wife his touch seems to have deserted him.

On Thursday morning one of the most sensible and senior government officials told me, as the first black puffs of smoke spread across the skyline, that the government had fiddled for eight months. They had been concentrating on what would happen after the March elections and had been unable to agree on anything political or economic. Now, he reckoned, they would have to do in a year what they had a year previously planned to do in ten.

He believed that if most of the students' demands were not met by May 20, Indonesia's National Awakening Day, then revolution was inevitable. His message may have been codes, but it was clear. The canny technician, the father of the nation, the soldier who built Indonesia after the mayhem of the Sukarno years had to go.

Heavens culture is paternal. Bapak Suharto has long been the father of his people. Even

the excesses of his children could be tolerated as long as the lot of the majority was improving. But now almost everyone I met claimed that he must take the responsibility for the catastrophe. Businessmen privately point to the bumbling and fumbling over the IMF packages, to the ludicrous appointments in his new government, to the incompetence and corruption of his administration. Since the death of his wife his touch seems to have deserted him.

Last week Bapak's soldiers shot dead six students at the country's most prestigious Christian University, which has large numbers of Chinese students. For the university there can now be no way back for a leader whose sole authority rests on a paternal autocracy and whose army has killed their pupils.

Suharto's reputation rested on the tough five star general whose security forces would provide law and order in an emergency. Last week that myth exploded. One foreign diplomat told me how frightened, poor-

ly trained, poorly officered policemen stood back as anarchy took root.

There appeared to be no adequate command and control system between the army and the police. There was even less evidence, he said, of any co-ordination with the civil authorities. Terrified commutes sat in traffic jams while the rabble smashed their windshields and demanded money. It was a shambles and Bapak was in Cairo.

Indonesians can now see the chasm politics and economics have merged into a vicious downward spiral. The banks and most private companies are bankrupt. Very few employers can pay wages or find funds for raw materials. Inflation is in double digits, and rising. Millions are being made unemployed. There is no safety net and savings are disappearing. Rice may be cheap but other basic foods are often imported. The currency has collapsed.

What can be done? Some I spoke to see a narrow window that could be squeezed through. A number of experienced and senior politicians supported by a sympathetic military, could force a meeting of the National Assembly. The Assembly would authorise a National Provisional Government, which would bring in some of the main opposition leaders alongside existing tried and manageably tested ministers.

The new administration would have two objectives: to prepare for open and free elections within a year, and to negotiate a new economic package with the IMF that would free up the economy by forcing through a rescheduling of the \$64bn of private debt. If cautious banks, both domestic and foreign, lose most of their money so be it. The flight of funds and people has to be halted and reversed. Every Indonesian eye is now on their president. He has until tomorrow, National Awakening Day, to divert the deluge.

All the West can do now is to send a simple message to the millions of young Indonesians who have escaped the misery of the kampungs to make new lives in the cities but who now confront a return to the deprivation and disease that has scarred the East Indies for centuries. *Generasi muda Indonesia, dunia tidak akan melepaskan mu.* (Youth of Indonesia, the world will not abandon you).

Sir Richard Needham was Minister of Trade between 1992 and 1995.

There's no point asking women to save us – that's our job



JACK O'SULLIVAN

I'll be honest. Suzanne Moore's attitude, in much of her writing, that all men are a waste of space upsets me a great deal. But what David Aaronovitch attempted to do last week in his column really drove me mad.

He wrote passionately,

seeking to persuade Suzanne to be nicer about us. We need her, he said, to give us a bit of support through rough times. But, of course, the predictable happened. Mummy refused. "That's not my job," she responded.

I can live with Suzanne's denigration. But David's plea, though brave, ultimately deepened men's humiliation. It painfully exposed a huge hole in male thinking – we're depending on women to provide us with a sense of our own well-being. We're swinging in the wind, hoping that the likes of Suzanne Moore will save us.

And if she doesn't, we seem to have no other resources beyond self-pity. It's a doomed strategy.

So my question is: why do we

men find it so hard to create a positive picture for ourselves, an image of a hopeful, happy future? Why do we rely on women instead of taking responsibility ourselves? Surely, if we set out our own agenda, Suzanne could rail at us as much as she liked, but we would have expressed our own truths, identified our own ambitions.

A clue to answering these questions lies in the events that have reignited the gender war. First Paul Johnson, the right-wing moralist revelling in 40 years of successful marriage, has been exposed as having a long-term mistress. Second, Hanif Kureishi's new novel, *Intimacy*, has detailed why a man (closely modelled on the author) leaves his wife and

to take his wife aside, tell her

children for his mistress. Johnson has thus been ridiculed as a hypocrite; Kureishi condemned as a misogynist.

But both tales contain a more profound truth about men. That, however active and capable we are in our public lives, our private, personal lives are often characterised by passivity.

So when Johnson wanted something a bit extra sexually – including spanking, in his case – he didn't take his wife aside and talk her through his needs. Instead, he quietly conducted an affair on the side, where he did not have to deal with any conflict that might arise out of his desires.

Likewise, reading Kureishi's work, you long for the narrator to take his wife aside, tell her

what he really wants sexually and so make the relationship a success. Yet at every opportunity he runs away from the need for action, retreating to an indulgent lover who anticipates his needs without any articulation on his part.

If, by the way, you doubt that many men are sexually passive, just look at the vast sex industry, geared towards satisfying men who cannot negotiate their needs with their regular partners.

Passivity explains problems

in other parts of our personal lives – our poor expression of emotions, our difficulty in feeding and caring for ourselves, our tendency to allow the home to be a feminised environment in which we are not quite comfortable. And, of course, our personal lack of assertiveness.

Transforming this Passive

Man – not-winning female approval – will be the great goal of male liberation. We will have to reclaim power over our personal lives that we handed over to women a long time ago. A tough, but revolutionary task.

Instead most of us, including the most powerful men in society, listen passively as commentators such as Suzanne Moore abuse us collectively for every crime imaginable.

Each tirade is greeted with an extraordinary silence. And when someone like David Aaronovitch protests, he has nothing but a plea for altruism to support his case.

It is FAIR to say that US Ambassador Philip Lader, who arrived in London last September, has not disappointed his critics. A great FOB (friend of Bill's), Lader first met Clinton at one of his touchy-feely, networking-for-VIPs "Renaissance weekends" in Hilton Head, South Carolina. In the seven months since his arrival in this country, Lader has not made much of an impression on the British public. His sensitive diplomatic has included taking a swing through Birmingham as Clinton's advance man prior to the G8. But word has reached Pandora that quite a few of Lader's old "Renaissance weekend" buddies have been enjoying "pain-sharing" New Age weekends in the ambassador's temporary residence in Holland Park. Is Lader a contender

for the title of Worst US Ambassador to the Court of St James? The early signs are encouraging.

Rare Welsh bit

PANDORA congratulates Lord Elis-Thomas for being named the first Welsh Nationalist candidate to run for one of the 40 seats in the new Welsh Assembly. The former Dafydd Thomas was elevated to the Lords by John Major in 1992 after representing Merionydd Nant Conwy as a Nationalist MP for 18 years. Currently chairman of the Welsh Language Board – where he draws £22,290 for a two-day week – Lord Elis-Thomas is a well-known face in the House of Lords. Welsh Assembly members are expecting to earn about £30,000 a year. Quite a good career for a former self-styled Marxist.

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PANDORA

Curry no favour

DON'T be surprised today if the Boy Wonder's speech to his alma mater in the suburbs of Paris, business school Instead, burns hot with Eurosceptical fervour. Pandora can reveal that the writing of Hague's message came after a dangerous split within his own camp over what take-away food should be consumed during its composition. According to inside sources, Curry won the day over pizza. Once the fuel had arrived from the Kundan curry house near Smith Square, the chances of Boy Wonder delivering a fiery oration in Fontainebleau were increased 10-fold.

Renaissance man

IT IS FAIR to say that US Ambassador Philip Lader, who arrived in London last September, has not disappointed his critics. A great FOB (friend of Bill's), Lader first met Clinton at one of his touchy-feely, networking-for-VIPs "Renaissance weekends" in Hilton Head, South Carolina. In the seven months since his arrival in this country, Lader has not made much of an impression on the British public. His sensitive diplomatic has included taking a swing through Birmingham as Clinton's advance man prior to the G8. But word has reached Pandora that quite a few of Lader's old "Renaissance weekend" buddies have been enjoying "pain-sharing" New Age weekends in the ambassador's temporary residence in Holland Park. Is Lader a contender

Reno charges Microsoft with acting illegally

By David Usborne
in New York

THE US Attorney General, Janet Reno, yesterday fired a potent legal missile at Microsoft Corporation, headed by multibillionaire Bill Gates, bluntly accusing of it acting illegally by using its dominant Windows operating system to "develop a chokehold" on the market for Internet browser software.

Opening the page on what may become one of the biggest anti-trust battles between government and a single corporation in American history, the Justice Department joined a coalition of 20 individual US states to launch twin lawsuits against Microsoft for alleged abuse of its near-monopoly position.

In the short term, the suits seek an immediate injunction from the US courts to force Microsoft to loosen its contractual agreements with the manufacturers of personal computers licensed to install Windows in their products, and with on-line service providers such as America Online.

Most dramatically, the injunction, if granted by a judge, would oblige Microsoft either to include the Netscape Navigator browser - the main competitor to its own Internet Explorer - on its new Windows 98 operating platform, or strip the Explorer from Windows 98.

There is no assurance that the courts will find in favour of such an injunction. A decision is likely in days or weeks. Meanwhile, there was no attempt by the Justice Department or the coalition of states to block the release of Windows 98, which Microsoft began shipping to

manufacturers yesterday even as the lawsuits were launched. Windows 98 should therefore be in retail computer shops on schedule on 25 June.

The lawsuits additionally allege that, in a first effort to stave off the Navigator, executives from Microsoft went to Netscape and asked that the two companies collude illegally to divide up the browser market. It was only after Netscape spurned the approach, according to the government, that Microsoft decided to use its dominance in the operating-system market to crush the Netscape browser.

Joel Klein, the assistant Attorney General, who has spearheaded the federal government's action, said the intent of the suits was not to hobble Microsoft. But he went on: "What cannot be tolerated and what the anti-trust laws forbid is the barrage of illegal and anti-competitive practices that Microsoft uses to destroy its rivals and to avoid competition on the merits".

In her own brief statements, Ms Reno said Mr Gates was guilty of "anti-competitive and exclusionary practices", and that "the firm should be permitted to keep out competitors or spurn innovations". She added: "We want to make sure that the field is open - open to the next Microsoft".

If the government prevails, the experience of millions of computer users worldwide could rapidly change. Ms Reno is asking that PC manufacturers be forced to offer an alternative to the Windows start-up screen that Microsoft now insists must be the first thing consumers see when they boot up their machines. Windows is

A Microsoft spokesman said the lawsuits were "without merit" and would be fought by the company in court. He said: "This is a sad day for consumers and a sad day for the American software industry."

President Bill Clinton conceded that the lawsuits could send shock waves through the US economy, but added: "I have confidence in the way the anti-trust division has handled it."

now the essential "central nervous system" of 90 per cent of all PCs purchased.

The manufacturers would consequently be liberated to customise that first boot-up screen, the "desktop", with any other applications they might want to offer to their buyers. Those applications, of course, could be supplied by any player in the software industry, not just Microsoft. As part of that arrangement, the manufacturers would be free to strip out the Explorer themselves.

In similar vein, the government is also hoping to undo what it considers to be exclusionary deals signed by Microsoft with such online providers as America Online, which oblige them to feature the Internet Explorer and other Microsoft applications on their home-page menus.

While Mr Gates is certain to fight the allegations with all his might, there is no certainty that the suits will do much damage to Microsoft's earnings, as its highly profitable NT package for networks and servers was not attacked by the Justice Department. Nonetheless, shares in Microsoft were trading down yesterday. At the lunch-hour, they were off \$3.76 on the Nasdaq at \$86.

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Fears over US rates unsettle exchanges

By Diane Coyle
Economics Editor

THE TWIN fears of a possible rise in US interest rates and a new bout of financial turmoil in Asia overshadowed the world's stock markets yesterday.

In London the FTSE 100 index ended 92 points down at 5,826.2, having dropped as much as 123 points earlier in the day. Wall Street opened lower, too, although US prices spent the rest of the morning treading water.

The US Federal Reserve's Open Markets Committee is not expected to take any action at its meeting today, but renewed signs that the American economy has lost some of its steam have led many analysts to pencil in a rise in the cost of borrowing later this year. If this happens, it would be the first increase since March 1997.

This caution was reinforced by earlier tumbles on Asian stock markets as a result of the continuing turmoil in Indonesia. Shares on the Jakarta exchange fell 4 per cent, while there was a 3 per cent

drop in Malaysian stocks and a more modest fall in Hong Kong: the Hang Seng index ended down 126 points at 9,411.97. Japan bucked the trend, however, with the Nikkei index climbing 142 points to 15,384.47.

Almost none of Wall Street's pundits expect the Fed to raise rates this week, not least because of the continuing fragile state of Asia's financial markets. "It is a question of domestic economic management versus the stability of the world financial system," said Ian Shepherdson, chief economist at HSBC Markets in New York. "A US rate rise could cause another lurch down in Asia and send the dollar even higher."

Despite these fears, the dollar climbed to a six-and-a-half year high against the yen yesterday, jumping above Y136. The market's biggest fear is that an ever-strengthening dollar will force China to abandon its peg to the US currency, causing further huge upheaval in Asia.

But a growing group of analysts believe the need to act

against domestic inflationary pressures will force the Fed's hand later in the year. The next meeting of the Open Markets Committee - a two-day session at the end of June just ahead of Fed chairman Alan Greenspan's twice-yearly Humphrey-Hawkins testimony to Congress - is seen as a potential danger point.

Sterling's recent slide halted yesterday ahead of figures due out today on retail price inflation and Thursday's report on retail sales. Underlying inflation last month is expected to have climbed further above the Government's 2.5 per cent target.

Even though the increase is the predictable result of higher *excise duties*, it will further dent confidence that UK interest rates have reached their peak.

Figures released last week showed a shock rise in earnings growth, while the Bank of England's quarterly inflation report showed that the Monetary Policy Committee remains split over the need for higher loan rates.

Christie's sold for £721m

By Nigel Cope
Associate City Editor

CITY analysts yesterday expressed surprise at the price paid for Christie's, the 223-year-old auction house which was sold to French billionaire François Pinault for £721m.

The cash offer of 396p per share is at a 40 per cent premium to the closing price on 1 May, the last day of trading before Mr Pinault bought a 29 per cent stake in the auctioneer.

"It's a pretty full price and at these levels I can't see any-one else coming in," said Guy

Lewis, Christie's shareholder and Beeson Gregory. "The business probably won't grow as quickly as it has. The Far East situation will take some demand out of the market and the lack of major single-owner sales is also a factor."

Mr Pinault's offer, which is being conducted through his private company Artémis, represents a huge premium to the offer tabled by a consortium of wealthy investors led by SBC Warburg earlier this year. That group, which included former Christie's shareholder Joe Lewis, was offering less than 300p per share. It was rejected

by the board of Christie's.

Some analysts question whether Mr Pinault could make his acquisition pay at these levels. However, his representatives said Mr Pinault is a shrewd, long-term investor who expected to take advantage of the liberalisation of the French art market this summer, when European Union rules eliminate long-standing French laws that have protected the big French auction houses from competition at home.

It is understood that Mr Pinault will favour evolution over revolution at Christie's. It will

still be run from London and New York and the board, led by chief executive Christopher Davidge, will be retained.

Mr Pinault's view is that in highly volatile markets such as art, earnings are too uncertain for a publicly quoted company.

He wants to build the Christie's brand worldwide and secure the company against downturns in the art market.

Shareholders are still entitled to their 4p final dividend, announced in February. Christie's shares closed up 75p at 387.5p.

Outlook, page 25

Abe looks on as the Savoy heads west

By Ann Treneman
and Andrew Yates

THE Savoy Group's 109th and final annual general meeting was an emotional affair. As the group has been bought for £230m by Blackstone Real Estate, the American investment group, it seemed fitting that the last annual general meeting was held yesterday in the Lincoln Room under the gaze of Honest Abe himself. He was

the oldest person in the room, but not by much. The crowd may have been blue-blood but it was blue-rinse too.

The first problem was the chairs. No one at the Savoy really knew how many of the 2,200 shareholders were going to show so they decided to take away the chairs just in case. In the end, only a few hundred came and so the chairs were put back. Thank God because standing was not an option for Honest Abe himself. He was

many of those who arrived leaning heavily on their canes.

By noon we were all sitting comfortably and so the chairman, Sir Ewen Ferguson, could begin. "Welcome to the 109th annual general meeting of the shareholders of this company," he said, slowly and patiently as Lincoln looked on. One woman grunted. She had been a shareholder for 40 years and was not impressed with the sale to Blackstone Real Estate Partners

of New York. "I don't approve at all," she said, holding on to her cane more tightly.

She wasn't the only one. "My name is Eve as in Christmas Eve," shouted a man in the front row. "Horatio was the bridge was high hearted. He was protecting Rome from predators. There was no self-interest in it!" He then went on to compare the Wotner family and the D'Oyley Carte Trust to Horatio. But now, he said, it

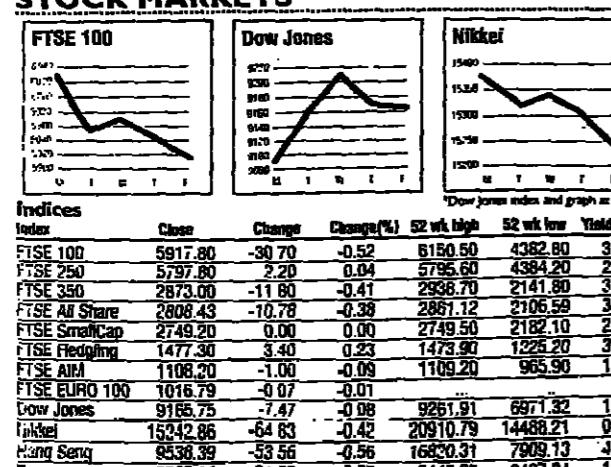
turns out they were open to a generous offer. "We small shareholders ... have been sold down the river!"

A murmur rippled through the room. "Hear, hear" could faintly be heard.

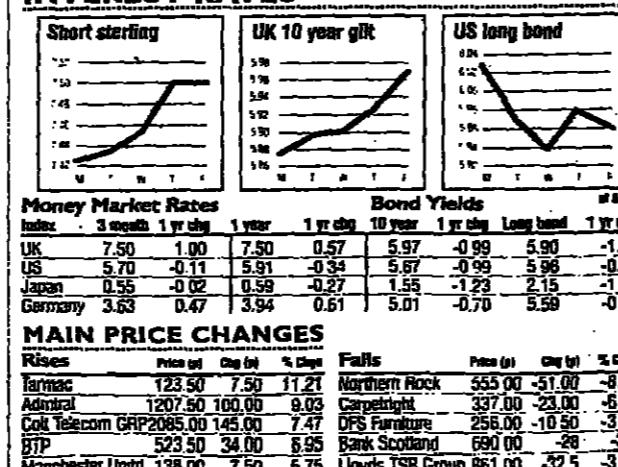
Mr Eve then had a final burst of patriotism. "The Savoy has gone to foreigners. The RAC has gone to foreigners. Rolls-Royce has gone to foreigners. Is the Marylebone Cricket Club safe?"

Up the markets

STOCK MARKETS



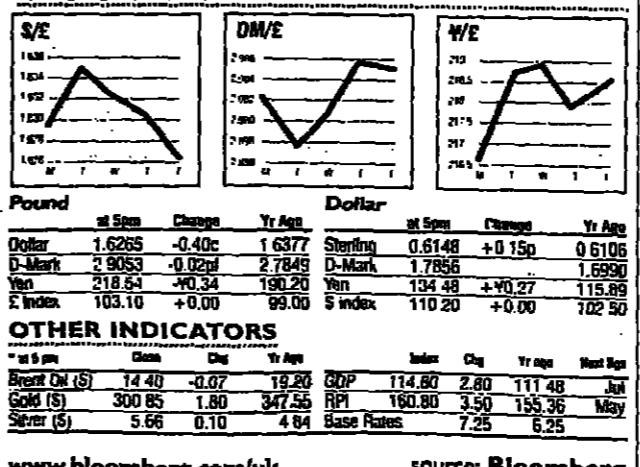
INTEREST RATES



MAIN PRICE CHANGES

Prices	Price up	Chg (p)	% Chg	Falls	Price (p)	Chg (p)	% Chg
Farmers	123.50	7.50	11.21	Northern Rock	555.00	-51.00	-8.42
Admiral	120.50	100.00	9.03	Carpetright	337.00	-23.00	-6.38
Cell Telecom	2085.00	145.00	7.47	DFS Furniture	256.00	-10.50	-3.94
BTP	523.50	34.00	6.95	Bank Scotland	690.00	-26	-3.84
Manchester United	138.00	7.50	5.75	Lloyds TSB Group	861.00	-32.5	-3.64

CURRENCIES



OTHER INDICATORS

Indices	Chg	Yr Ago	Index	Chg	Yr Ago	
Brent Oil (\$)	14.40	-0.07	19.20	GDP	114.80	2.80
Gold (\$)	300.85	1.80	347.55	RPI	160.80	3.50
Silver (\$)	5.66	0.10	4.84	Base Rates	7.25	6.25

www.bloomberg.com/uk

source: Bloomberg

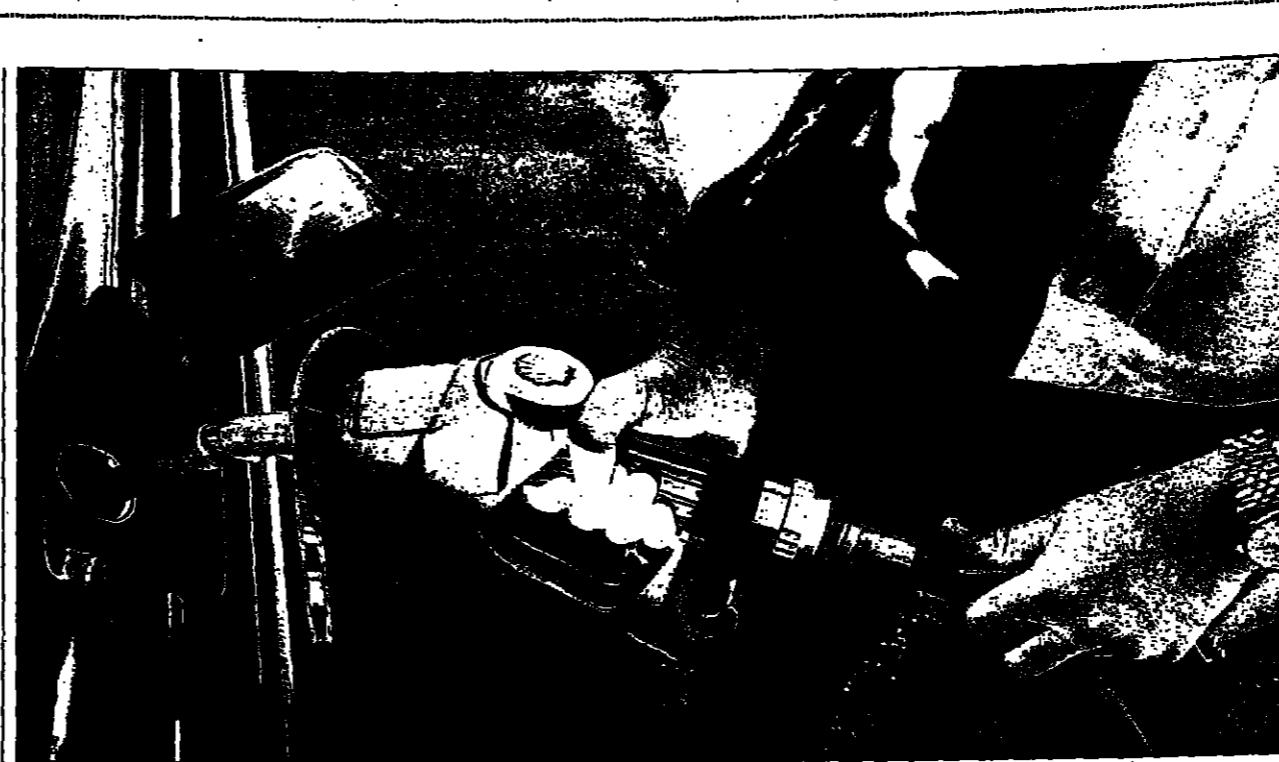
TOURIST RATES

Australia (\$)	2.5133
Austria (schillings)	19.73
Belgium (francs)	57.99
Canada (\$)	2.2929
Cyprus (pounds)	0.8244
Denmark (krone)	10.76
Finland (marks)	8.5026
France (francs)	9.4230
Germany (marks)	2.8194
Greece (drachma)	486.79
Hong Kong (\$)	12.17
Ireland (pounds)	1.1127
Italian (lire)	60.22
Israel (shekels)	5.4888
Italy (lira)	277.9
Japan (yen)	214.79
Malaysia (ringgit)	5.9372

Rates for indicator purposes only.

Source: Thomas Cook

كذا من الأصل



The Independents' market share has plummeted, yet the OFT ruled there was no evidence of predatory behaviour

Pearson seeks a buyer for Madame Tussauds

By Peter Thal Larsen
and Andrew Yates

PEARSON, the media conglomerate, is understood to be looking to sell Madame Tussauds, the waxworks that has become one of London's most popular tourist attractions. The group is believed to have discreetly approached potential buyers in an attempt to broker a deal.

Pearson held talks with Rank, the Butlins to Hard Rock Cafe leisure group, earlier this year according to industry sources. The discussions subsequently broke down over the valuation put on the business. Rank balked at Pearson's asking price of more than £300m and walked away from the deal.

However,

THE INVESTMENT COLUMN

EDITED BY ANDREW YATES

Good cheer
from W&D

AFTER a poor year in 1997 when Wolverhampton & Dudley rather shot itself in the foot by making some misguided investments, the country's biggest regional brewer appears to be showing the green shoots of recovery.

Pre-tax profits for the six months to March rose a respectable 8 per cent to £20.3m. Brewing trading profits jumped almost 47 per cent to £5m, thanks to the introduction of new lagers such as Heineken and Fosters in its pubs and a tight control on costs. Its community pubs are also performing surprisingly well in the face of stiff competition from the major branded chains. And sales at its retail estate have started to move in the right direction again with like-for-like turnover up 2.8 per cent. Sensibly it has chosen to cut investment in its managed pub estate to concentrate on more successful brands such as Varity and Poacher's Pocket.

But this recovery could turn out to be short lived. W&D admitted as much when it warned that the intense competition in the pub market shows no signs of letting up. To make matters worse the Midlands, the group's traditional heartland, and the North-east, where it also has a strong presence, have been particularly badly hit by the slump in manufacturing impact caused by the strength of the pound.

W&D is probably better placed than many regional brewers, with its brands like Banks' bitter enjoying a market stronghold in its trading areas. Whether the group can effectively compete with the huge amounts of money the nationals are pouring behind their leading brands and themed pub chains is another question. Perhaps the only answer is for the regionals to think about clubbing together to take on the likes of Bass and Scottish & Newcastle.

Pammi Gordon points out that much of W&D's rise in earnings is due to financial engineering rather than real organic growth, with the figures flattered by a recent share buy-back and a delay in £1m of marketing and refurbishment spend until the second half of the year. The broker forecasts full-year profits of £45m, putting the shares on a prospective PE ratio of 10. High enough.

The benefits
of Celltech

THE PAST 12 months have not been kind to Celltech, one of the UK's longest established biotech companies. A year ago its shares halved after its septic-shock treatment

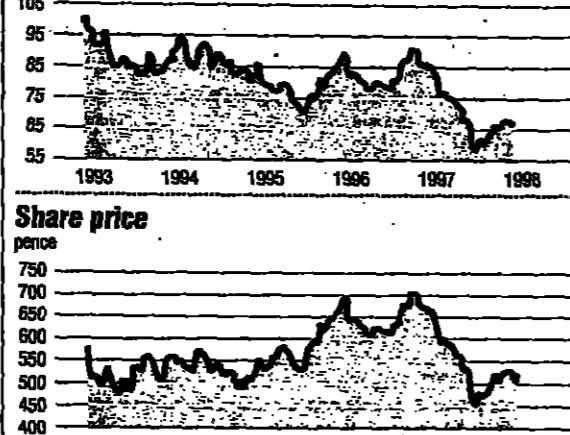
Wolverhampton & Dudley: At a glance

Market value: £300m, share price 506p (+3p)

Trading record	1996	1997	Half year
Turnover (£m)	238	250	133
Pre-tax profits (£m)	2.7	4.7	2.0
Earnings per share (p)	45.6	45.7	22.1
Dividends per share (p)	1.0	1.0	0.5

Wolverhampton & Dudley vs Brewing sector

Released May 1998



RM in the fast stream

WHAT a difference a new government makes. Just over a year ago RM was a successful operator in what was seen as a small and rather dull sector of the information technology industry – supplying computers and educational software to schools. Come the election, everything changed. Gone were the Conservative cuts, in came New Labour and its love for education. Since Tony Blair walked into No 10, RM's share price has almost doubled.

Labour has already earmarked £100m to put more computers in primary schools and help connect them to the Internet. With close to half of that market in its grasp, RM looks certain to benefit. Another bonus is the lottery-funded programme to spend £20m on IT training for teachers.

The figures also look promising. First-half profits came in £2.5m in the six months to March compared to losses of £2m in the same period last year though this year's numbers were boosted by more than £5m from disposals. Even so, the group has £40m of cash and its licensing income is stronger than expected up to £5.7m from £2m. The company now believes it will make a small but sustainable profit in 1999-2000.

The biotech sector may not be flavour of the month in the City but by most yardsticks Celltech shares look good value. The company is not over-reliant on just one or two drugs with six in clinical trials and two at the pre-clinical stage. And it has other revenue streams such as its patents from which it collects royalty payments. It may lack the explosive potential of some rivals but the downside is also more limited. Attractive.

With its full offering of software, services and internet connections, RM looks ideally placed to reap the benefits. However, with the shares – up 27.5p to 1487.5p yesterday – currently trading on a forward PE ratio of 43, the good news is all in the price.

By Terry Macalister

BLUEBIRD Toys looks poised to fall into US hands after a new 116.5p per share offer from Mattel which values the UK company at £48.5m and trumps a rival bid from Genuity Peat Group.

Mattel's latest offer represents a 27 per cent premium to Bluebird's share price the day before a hostile bid arrived from GPG, the investment group chaired by Sir Ron Brierley. The Bluebird share price rose 2p to 116p yesterday.

By Terry Macalister

RIVALS of Ladbroke have launched an attack on the leisure group's bid to buy the Coral betting chain in an attempt to persuade the Monopolies and Mergers Commission to block the deal.

William Hill, the betting chain owned by Nomura and an arch competitor of Ladbroke, is understood to have lobbied the MMC hard to force the combined group to dispose of betting shops or rule out the merger entirely.

Ladbroke presented its own case for the acquisition of Coral to the MMC yesterday. It is believed to have claimed that it will not have a monopoly in the betting industry because the market is a local one and it has already disposed of outlets within a quarter of a mile of each other.

But other betting groups maintain that the deal will create a dominant force in the off-course betting industry with a market share of more than 39 per cent.

Analysts believe that Ladbroke is likely to have to make more disposals to get the green light for the deal.

Brewer freezes prices to tempt World Cup drinkers

By Andrew Yates

WOLVERHAMPTON & Dudley, the UK's largest regional brewer and pub group, is planning to freeze the price of its beer throughout the summer in an effort to attract customers during the World Cup and step up

its competition with the national pub companies.

The group hopes to draw in sports fans who would normally watch the football at home nursing a few cans of beer bought from the supermarket or off-licence. David Thompson, chief executive, said yesterday:

ITNET five share £30m

By Peter Thal Larsen

FIVE directors of ITNET will share a bonanza of more than £20m when the information technology group comes to the market early next month.

Bridget Blow, the chief executive who led ITNET's management in a buyout from food and drink group Cadbury Schweppes in 1995, holds a stake which is expected to be worth at least £8m. Three other executive directors will be worth £6m each while the Roger Catto, the finance director who joined the company in 1996, will pocket about £1.7m.

The flotation will also ben-

efit most of ITNET's 1,500 employees, who currently own 25 per cent of the shares. Their combined stake is likely to be worth at least £30m.

The company's value has risen rapidly since the management buyout, reflecting the market's growing demand for information technology stocks.

At the time of the management buyout, Cadbury Schweppes sold the business for just £32.5m. When pricing details are confirmed in a few weeks the company is expected to be valued at between £150m and £200m. This includes about £30m of new money which the company will use to redeem preference

shares and strengthen its balance sheet.

The company stressed that the directors would not be selling more than 40 per cent of their stakes in the placing. Its venture capital backers, led by 3i, are also likely to hold on to some of their shares.

ITNET operates in the fast-growing area of IT outsourcing, where it takes over the running of computer departments for corporations or local councils. It is also expanding into business process outsourcing, having recently won contracts to handle revenue collection for Hackney and South Buckinghamshire councils.

Mrs Blow said the company

"has reached the stage in its development where it will benefit from the advantages of being a listed company". She said the flotation would strengthen the company's balance sheet, allowing it to bid for larger contracts, and also give it the firepower to make acquisitions in the future, though she stressed that no deals were imminent.

ITNET normally concentrates on contracts worth between £1m and £20m a year, which tend to run for between three and five years. The company's largest customer is Birmingham City Council, which accounts for 13 per cent

of its revenues.

Analysts said the company

was likely to attract a high valuation. Shares in its closest competitors, outsourcing groups FI and Capita, have also more than doubled in the past year.

Bundesbank chief warns on freedom of ECB

HANS TIETMEYER, president of the Bundesbank, warned yesterday that the success of the single currency depended on the freedom of the European Central Bank from political interference. It would also be essential, he warned, for member governments to stick to the tough budget policies set out in the stability pact. Although Mr Tietmeyer said the appointments to the executive board of the ECB should enhance its credibility in the financial markets, he expressed disappointment over the row about its presidency, settled in a last-minute fudge at the special summit earlier this month.

"Some of the incidents in Brussels during the first weekend in May may in this context have been a timely warning, and a lesson to be learned by all," he said, delivering the Mais Lecture at the City University Business School last night. More controversially, Mr Tietmeyer insisted the ECB should not be accountable to national parliaments. "Actual independence from the influence of political bodies is essential for the future credibility of the European Central Bank."

And to ensure that monetary policy did not conflict with national economic policies, it would be essential for member governments to stick to strict budget disciplines, he warned. Mr Tietmeyer also backed calls for structural reforms that would make the Continental economies more flexible.

Bank account 'a legal right'

BIFU, the banking union, has called on the government to make access to a basic bank account "a legal right", in an attempt to tackle the problem of financial exclusion. In a motion passed at the union's annual conference in Liverpool, delegates also demanded that banks consult on branch closures and that financial institutions undertake to provide services to the entire community.

A spokesperson said the union was particularly keen to ensure everyone had access to direct debit facilities, as payment by direct debit often means lower per unit prices. He added that the union had been campaigning against financial exclusion – the act of denying people access to basic banking services – for some time, and welcomed the government's recent decision to establish a social exclusion unit.

More Group in £6.6m buy

MORE GROUP, the outdoor advertising company at the eye of the acrimonious bid battle between rival groups Clear Channel and Decaux, yesterday expanded by acquiring Town & City, a billboard operator, for £6.6m. The company, which operates premium billboards in the Granada, Tyne Tees and Central TV regions, last year had gross sales of £7.5m and pretax profits of £0.7m.

Roger Parry, More's chief executive, said the deal would expand the group's More O'Ferrall billboard operation in the UK. However, he denied that the deal was intended to spoil Decaux's £475m bid for More, which is currently awaiting clearance by the Office of Fair Trading, pointing out that the two companies had been talking since 1995.

M&G marketing head leaves

M&G, the fund management group, yesterday said its marketing and sales director was leaving the company to pursue his interests outside the City. Peter Emms will step down from the board on June 30. Mr Emms' job will be split. William Nott, who currently heads up M&G's institutional business, will take over the sales role. Rachel Medill, currently M&G's head of corporate communications, will take responsibility for advertising and direct marketing. Mr Nott will be replaced by John Innes, who joined M&G from Fleming Investment Management in June.

Eastern in card alliance

EASTERN, Britain's biggest electricity supplier, has signed up to Barclaycard in a strategic alliance to attack the deregulated energy market. Customers who sign up with Eastern for electricity and gas will be able to pay their bills monthly by credit card. Barclaycard has 6.8 million cardholders. Eastern has already entered similar alliances with Cellnet and Ford.

Construction growth slows

UK construction industry output has continued to expand in the first quarter of 1998, but the rate of growth has slowed since the fourth quarter of 1997 with the regional workload – particularly in London – down in some areas, according to the latest survey by the Construction Confederation. The report found that a seasonally adjusted balance of 19 per cent of companies reported higher output during the first quarter of 1998, down from 32 per cent for the fourth quarter of 1997. Despite this apparent slowdown in growth, the levels of tender success and new enquiries were up slightly on the last survey's balances.

COMPANY RESULTS

	Turnover £	Pre-tax £	EPS	Dividend
Cambridge Antibody (1)	9.45m (2.85m)	-2.97m (-6.41m)	-12.4p (-50.5p)	nil (nil)
Centrica (1)	5.7m (2.0m)	2.5m (-5.8m)	3.0 (-7.8)	nil (nil)
Chrysalis Group (1)	59.0m (62.9m)	-0.894m (-1.7m)	-3.77p (6.15p)	nil (nil)
Diploma (1)	148.0m (125.5m)	7.6m (10.8m)	8.1p (12.3p)	4.5p (4.5p)
Flame Art Development (F)	217.05m (225.5m)	7.85m (10.15m)	3.58p (5.74p)	1.75p (-)
Forage Group (F)	- (-)	11.1m (10.0m)	12.1p (11.4p)	7.2p (7.2p)
Resolution Plcability (F)	12.09m (5.8m)	1.028m (0.270m)	0.622p (0.625p)	0.2p (0.3p)
RHM (1)	50.5m (43.0m)	0.638m (1.88m)	2.4p (8.3p)	2.7p (2.5p)
Style Holdings (F)	35.0m (27.2m)	1.88m (1.53m)	5.3p (8.8p)	0.87p (-)
UPF Group (1)	30.2m (31.5m)	3.55m (3.77m)	6.52p (7.11p)	1.7p (1.7p)
Wadbrooke & Dudley (1)	139.6m (133.3m)	20.3m (18.7m)	22.1p (19.8p)	2.2p (0.8p)
W Young (1)	38.1m (29.3m)	2.198m (1.642m)	6.6p (5.7p)	1.5p (1.4p)
(F) - Final (1) - Interim t EPS is pre-exceptuals *Dividend to be paid as a PDI				

gin was preparing to move out of Belgium, where it is still campaigning for a cut in the country's high employment taxes, but warned that growth in British services might not be handled by the Belgian-based carrier if the tax issue was not resolved.

Meanwhile, Mr Branson said Virgin's new Stansted flights would compete with British Airways' low-cost airline, Virgin Sun.

Speaking at the start of Virgin flights from London Stansted to Brussels, Mr Branson said he expected to make an announcement on the acquisition "in the next week or so". He confirmed recent reports that he was also seeking an operating licence in Ireland.

He denied this meant Vir-

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MFI touches five-year low as forecasts slashed

MARKET REPORT



DEREK PAIN

MFI, the furniture group, was at one time bumping along at a five-year low as investors fretted about trading prospects.

The shares closed off 5p at 82p after touching 80p. Last year they were riding at 160p and topped 200p in 1996.

The stock market is worried about results for the year just ended. Forecasts have been pulled back and stockbroker Sutherlands thinks the group will produce only £56m.

Interim profits were disappointing and a trading statement in March sent the shares tumbling.

There is talk chairman Derek Hunt is under institutional pressure. A series of investment meetings seem to have inspired little confidence, failing to support the shares.

Management changes have been made but institutions may demand a more sweeping shake-up.

The group's market image has not been helped by a series

of profit warnings from related businesses. On Friday Allied Carpets added to the gloom. Others, like DFS and Carpetright, have highlighted the sharp slowdown in consumer spending.

Some fear MFI may feel obliged to join the trend and give a trading update which will not be encouraging.

As MFI wilted its old stable mate, the Asda superstores chain, fell 2p to 180.5p as it admitted abortive talks with Kingfisher. It is Asda's third unsuccessful expansion attempt: the company is beginning to look desperate to complete a deal. Kingfisher rose 5p to 1,072p.

Blue chips suffered their third reverse in a row. They were weighed down by growing anxiety about Indonesia and fears US interest rates will be driven higher this week. At one time Footsie was down 123.3 points; it ended 91.6 points off at 5,826.2.

Possibly for the first time, Christie International, the auctioneer, did actually attract a bid - from Artemis, the French group which recently snapped up 29 per cent from tycoon Joseph Lewis. Artemis bid 396p a share, sending Christie surging 75p to 387.5p.

the Moscow stock market was also cited as a reason for the weakness. Punc selling with investors fearing a devaluation sent values tumbling nearly 12 per cent. Although still small Moscow has attracted significant amounts of foreign capital and its slump created considerable unease in some investment houses.

The mid cap index was just - caught up in the gloom, ending a six-day winning streak with a modest 5.3 fall to 5,792.5. But the small cap index managed to ignore the climate, pushing ahead 2.3 to a 2,751.5 peak.

Hillsdown Holdings put on 3.5p to 189p as Unigate, off 17p at 668p hovered, contemplating a strike.

Christie International, the auctioneer, did actually attract a bid - from Artemis, the French group which recently

Pearson was the best performing blue chip, up 81.5p to 1,027.5p, on the acquisition of US educational publisher Simon & Schuster.

Compass, the contract caterer rose, 28p to a 1,115p peak ahead of figures today. As if to overshadow the results Rentokil Initial, which has admitted casting an eye over

Compass, rose 5p to 392p.

Cadbury Schweppes melted 2p to 905p after an analysis

jaunt to its US soft drink operations. Rolls-Royce was lowered 3p to 187.75p; its US

investment road show starts tomorrow and is said to have

attracted strong interest. Cobham, the aerospace and defence engineer, rose 14p to 1,147p ahead of an investment dinner at London's Claridges, hosted by Henderson Crosthwaite.

Halifax and Royal Bank of

Scandinavica firmed on weekend

reports of link up talks. Royal

Bank denied any such discussions. Halifax ended 15.5p

higher to 792p; Royal Bank 14p to 985.5p.

Vodafone was lowered 8p to 650p following a 4.45 million

sale at 530p and Hanson lost

15p to 357p as house stock-

broker ABN Amro moved

from buy to hold.

Billiton, the resources

group, is due to meet analysts

this week. The shares fell

4.75p to 162p. Friday's huge

placing, it transpires, was due

to Sanlam & Rembrandt, a

South African group, cutting

its stake from 15.7 per cent to

10.9 per cent. S&P, which says

it will retain its remaining

shares, is involved in a corporate

reorganisation, leading to

demutualisation and a share

listing in Johannesburg.

Newcomers had a mixed

reception. Inter-Alliance, a

small spread of financial ad-

visers closed at 365p from a

325p placing; scientific pub-

lisher Taylor & Francis, placed

at 20p, ended at 24.25p

and Dimension Resources, placed

at 30p, finished at 24p.

IT shares had another

strong session. Misys rose

265p to 3,390p and Sage 47.5p

to 1,457.5p. The £1bn flotation

of ComputaCenter is generat-

ing extra power for the sector.

International Public Rela-

tions rose 9.5p to 55p after

denying it had agreed a take

over bid but admitted it was in

various sets of talks one of

which could lead to an offer.

TAKING STOCK

H YOUNG, the distributor, added 8p to 162.5p, a peak, following its third takeover this month. It is paying up to £2.3m for Metro Products, the company behind the Stoplock car immobiliser.

The three acquisitions command sales of more than £26m. At the halfway stage Young lifted sales 30 per cent to £38m with profits

emerging 34 per cent higher at £2.2m. The market expects £25.5m this year with £5.65m

next.

INSURANCE group Ockham, which had intended to float stockbroker Wise Speke, is now planning to sell the firm. Likely buyer is stockbroker Brewin Dolphin, which has an extensive private client business, although other parties are talking to the insurer.

REVELATION Piccadilly, the luggage and niche retailer, rose 0.75p to 6.75p after a near fourfold profits increase to just over £1m. Around £1.6m is likely this year.

Share Spotlight

share price, pence

1200

1100

1000

900

800

700

600

500

400

300

200

100

0

Source: Bloomberg

MJJASONDJFMAM

Source: Bloomberg

Share Price Data

Prices are in sterling except where stated. The yield is the last twelve months' declared gross dividend as a percentage of the share price. The price/earning (P/E) ratio is the share price divided by last year's earnings per share, excluding extraordinary items but including dividends. Other details: Ex rights x Ex dividend; S suspended; P partly paid; N not listed; A/Amt. Gilt Prices are Bloomberg Generic.

Source: Bloomberg

Share Price Data

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0900 calls cost 5p per minute.
(T5, London EC2A 4TJ)

Stocks volume: 749.00 trades 69,063
Gilt Index 103.7 +0.04

Market Leaders: Top 20 volumes

Stocks Stock Vol Stock Vol Stock Vol

Amersham Group 22.00m 0.00m 0.00m 0.00m 0.00m 0.00m

Thames Tidal 20.00m 0.00m 0.00m 0.00m 0

Warning lights are flashing in the US: a slowdown is on the way



**HAMISH
MCRAE
ON A GLOBAL
BALANCE IN
GROWTH
WHICH LOOKS
UNSUSTAINABLE**

THIS may turn out to be the week when the US at long last starts to push up interest rates.

The Federal Reserve has been hoping for some time that the US economic boom would peter out of its own accord, but the most recent figures last week suggested that things were still running along pretty fast. Growth in the first quarter of the year was running at an annual rate of 4 per cent despite falling exports to East Asia, and unemployment fell to 4.3 per cent in April.

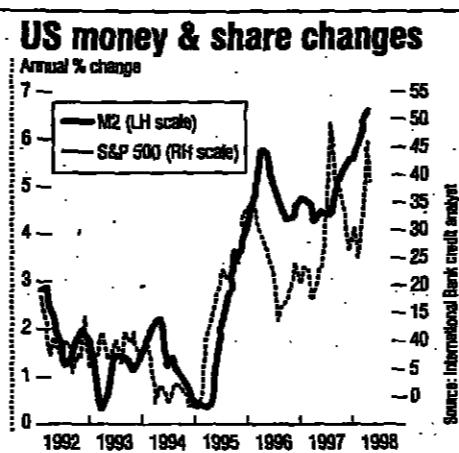
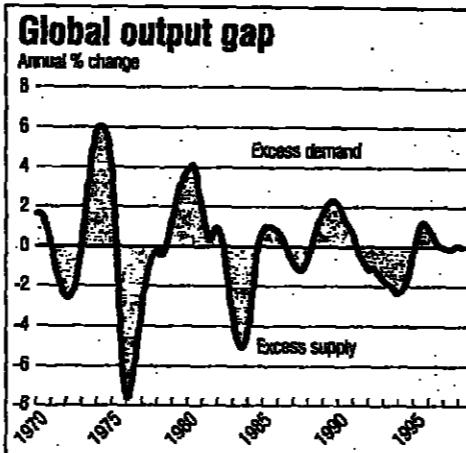
Most market forecasts do now suggest a slowdown, but were US rate policy to be determined solely by domestic considerations there is little doubt that rates would be going up. In fact they would have gone up long ago.

The main issue – in reality the only issue – has been whether the East Asian crisis is so serious that the US would be unwise to jack up rates just at this time. It has been argued that even a quarter percentage point rise in US rates would lead to a further East Asian meltdown.

Eventually, too, the decline in demand in East Asia ought to slow growth in the US. On the other hand it can equally be argued that East Asia is pretty adept at the meltdown game anyway and pre-empting a rise in US inflation is a more necessary global goal. If rates were put up a bit now, they could always be cut later if and when the fall-off in demand hits the US economy.

Anyway, we will see: there is the regular two-day Open Market Committee meeting starting tomorrow, which has to make the call. Trying to guess which way it will jump from 3,500 miles away is not a very sensible procedure; in fact it is not very sensible from any distance – not that that has stopped the market attempting to do so.

But it is sensible to be prepared. Think global, rather than just US, and have a look at the long graph on the left. This shows the global output gap since 1970, that is the ex-



tent to which output figures for 40 of the main countries around the world have diverged from their sustainable growth paths.

Three things stand out. Most obviously, we are now very close to global balance, though this masks the fact that some places (like Japan and much of Continental Europe) would be below the line with excess supply, while others (particularly the US) are above it with excess demand.

Second, the amplitude of the waves has gradually diminished since the 1970s: the lines still go up and down, but the swings seem to be smaller. And third, unless something utterly remarkable has happened, the swings will continue, so that at some stage soon we will climb above or dip below again.

Even if the world's monetary authorities had perfect judgement, which they don't, and the world economy responded swiftly and effectively to changes in policy, which it doesn't, the present balance is not sustainable. Even if you believe that macro-economic management has been getting better (and falling inflation world-wide suggests it is), there has to be an element of fluke, in that one bit of the world which is up should happen to be offsetting the rest which is mostly down.

That won't continue. It can't: at some stage countries like Japan have to achieve a re-

covery or something really dreadful will happen, while at some stage the US will dip back towards its historic level of capacity utilisation. The instability of the US position is highlighted in the right hand graph, which shows the relationship between the growth of the US broad money supply, M2, and the boom on the stock market as measured by the S&P 500 share index of large companies.

You don't need to be an expert in the intricacies of the US monetary aggregates to be concerned about this link. One of the main reasons that money supply has been rising rapidly is the growth of money market funds, which accounts for about one-third of the recent growth. The International Bank Credit Analyst team, which drew attention to this link, reckons that there are two possible explanations for it. One is that the rise in share prices has encouraged people to take some of their profits out of the stock market and stuff these into money market funds. The other is that the surge in wealth associated with the bull market has boosted the demand for ordinary liquid assets and one popular way to hold such assets is money market funds.

Actually I don't think it matters terribly why Americans are putting money into these funds: the fact remains that they are building up assets which can quickly be converted into spending power if they so wish. There is a lot of dosh sloshing around. The data is flashing a warning light, and it will continue to flash the warning light whether or not the Fed pushes up rates this week.

The conclusion that flows from this is that one way or another the US economy is going to slow down. It is still perfectly possible that US interest rates will remain on hold and the economy will slow of its own accord later this year. It is equally possible that there is going to be some sort of discontinuity, with rates going up and that rise stopping the economy. But slow it will. That is bound to happen, for countries' economies do not grow faster than their trend growth for ever.

So it is not being apocalyptic to say that at some stage in the next 18 months the US will move into a phase where it grows below trend and where unemployment starts to rise. It is simply common sense to acknowledge that the economic cycle still exists, albeit possibly in a more benign form. The Fed's decision seems important and of course for anyone involved in the markets it is. But for the rest of us all we need to know is that somehow the US economy has to come off its present unsustainable growth path, and it is going to be somewhere between slightly uncomfortable and very uncomfortable for all of us when it does so.

PEOPLE & BUSINESS

**TERRY
MACALISTER**



LORD SIMON of Highbury, minister for trade and competitiveness in Europe, was not involved in the rioting at the weekend outside the Arsenal football ground.

Very keen supporter he may be – taking his Highbury title in honour of the club – but he was not one of those fans who celebrated their club's double cup and league win by dismantling a London bus.

How do we know? Because the former BP chairman was not even in the country at the time, unlike Cardinal Hume and George Carey who definitely were.

No, Lord Simon did not even watch the Gunners blow apart Newcastle United at Wembley. Why? Because he was dealing with something much more fun: chairing the EU's internal market council meeting in Brussels.

Not so work-conscious but not a ricer either, was Lord Simon's union counterpart, Roger "minimum wage" Lyons, general secretary of white collar union, MSF.

He willingly admits to cheering Arsenal on Saturday along with his four sons. He was also one of the 300,000 faithful who turned out cel- ebrating the team's homecoming to Islington the next day.

Billed to appear on Sunday's *Money Pro- gramme*, Mr Lyons was forced to don suit and shirt for the recorded TV interview. He says: "I changed into my Arsenal supporters shorts and shirt in the BBC car park straight afterwards before racing back to North London to join the celebrations."

THE ENTHUSIASM on the streets was met with a torrent of activity on the Stock Exchange's junior market, Oxfex, where shares in Arsenal football club trade. John Jenkins, whose company of the same name makes a market in Oxfex shares, says six shares were bought or sold in three separate transactions.

That sounds laughably piffling but it is big business on the sub-AIM market where shares slumber for weeks without trade. So the bad news is if you want to buy into the Gunners it will cost you between £2,700 and £2,900, a full £100 up on Friday.

MORE interested in Scotland's forthcoming World Cup hopes than Arsenal is Regent Pacific boss Jim Mellon, who opens a giant conference today in London on Russian and east European investment.

Regent is still more associated in the public mind with east Asia and in particular Hong Kong, where it is listed, rather than the former Soviet Union. In fact Regent sold most of its assets in Asia 18 months ago before the currency and economic turmoil. But although it has over \$2bn invested in eastern Europe, Mr Mellon is still an Asian man and is starting to rebuild in the region.

He claims his only remaining Hong Kong hedge fund is up 50 per cent against a market down 50 per cent. This is giving him investor clout for a venture fund established in January to snap up distressed Asian assets.

"We put \$40m into the first tranche," he says cheerfully. "So what is his view on the seemingly doomed Indonesian economy?"

"We have three guys in Indonesia looking at opportunities. It's very tragic what is happening but we think the situation is at a turning point. Suharto will not last two weeks. It's a good time to buy, assets are very cheap," he explains.

Melon is nearly as keen on Indonesia as he is on running. He completed the Paris marathon six weeks ago and is already in training for his next one in Florence. He has a family tradition to keep up because his running mate is his father, who at 69 is still able to run 26 miles at a little over four hours.

ONE CAN only think with foreboding who the latest recruit to the Bank of England's supervision board supports. Gottfried Bruder is the first foreign national appointed to this worthy group which in June moves from Old Lady to Financial Services Authority control.

Mr Bruder, whose groundbreaking appointment was announced yesterday, was chief executive of Al Ahli Bank in the Middle East until recently but one can guess that it is not Kuwait that he cheers on the pitch. More ominous are his past years with Commerzbank in Frankfurt and Dusseldorf.

MEANWHILE no sporting metaphors were required for another new appointment, this time at British American Tobacco, where Bill Owens has joined the board. Mr Owens' prized experience comes from his former military career as Colin Powell's deputy chief of staff. BAT needs firepower for its titanic struggle with government over a smokers compensation package. As chairman Martin Broughton quipped: "This really shows it's war in the US."

LESS DRAMATIC but significant changes are taking place at London Merchant Securities, founder shareholder in British Satellite Broadcast and owner of the Angel Centre in London.

Lord Rayne has handed over executive duties to two joint managing directors, Nick Driver and Robert Rayne. Another non-executive board member seems to have anticipated changes to the House of Lords by the Blair government. His name: Lord Remnant.

Foreign Exchange Rates

Country	Sterling	1 month	3 month	Dollar	1 month	3 month	D-Mark	1 month	3 month
UK	10000	2.6078	2.6021	80515	0.6168	0.6165	0.3445	1.0000	1.0000
Australia	2.6715	2.6708	2.6701	16025	1.0000	1.0000	0.9939	1.0000	1.0000
Canada	1.2041	1.2034	1.2025	80515	0.6168	0.6165	0.3445	1.0000	1.0000
Belgium	2.5955	2.5934	2.5926	53005	0.6165	0.6165	0.3445	1.0000	1.0000
Canada	2.8550	2.8498	2.8492	14502	1.0000	1.0000	0.8712	1.0000	1.0000
Denmark	10584	10577	10577	80570	0.6202	0.6202	0.3507	1.0000	1.0000
Finland	8.8367	8.7981	8.7890	54005	0.6165	0.6165	0.3437	1.0000	1.0000
France	9.736	9.702	9.643	59893	0.5935	0.5935	0.3357	1.0000	1.0000
Germany	2.5030	2.5023	2.5079	50404	0.6165	0.6165	0.3445	1.0000	1.0000
Japan	5.79	5.75	5.75	72488	0.7013	0.7013	0.4545	1.0000	1.0000
Hong Kong	12.583	12.583	12.600	14020	1.0000	1.0000	0.7851	1.0000	1.0000
Ireland	1.526	1.519	1.519	72505	0.7013	0.7013	0.4545	1.0000	1.0000
Italy	20.618	20.519	20.454	70223	0.7013	0.7013	0.4545	1.0000	1.0000
Japan	2.52	2.51	2.51	72505	0.7013	0.7013	0.4545	1.0000	1.0000
Malaysia	6.2277	6.3304	6.4638	50350	0.6165	0.6165	0.3445	1.0000	1.0000
Mexico	1.8665	1.8665	1.8665	50380	0.6165	0.6165	0.3445	1.0000	1.0000
Netherlands	3.2702	3.2677	3.2677	72058	0.7013	0.7013	0.4545	1.0000	1.0000
New Zealand	12.213	12.176	12.22	72505	0.7013	0.7013	0.4545	1.0000	1.0000
Norway	1.5213	1.517	1.517	72505	0.7013	0.7013	0.4545	1.0000	1.0000
Portugal	2.9730	2.9678	2.9597	50305	0.6165	0.6165	0.3445	1.0000	1.0000
Saudi Arabia	0.052	0.052	0.052	70223	0.7013	0.7013	0.4545	1.0000	1.0000
US	1052	1052	1052	70223	0.7013	0.7013	0.4545	1.0000	1.0000

Interest Rates

Country	3 mth	6 mth	1 yr	2 yr	5 yr	10 yr	30 yr
Australia	4.28	4.01	4.50	5.05	5.44	5.73	6.03
Canada	4.245	4.07	4.50	5.05	5.44	5.73	6.03
Czech Rep	9.2555	8.2245	9.57	10.57	10.57	10.57	10.57
Egypt	5.5456	3.455	5.575	5.575	5.575	5.575	5.575
Ghana	3.7837	2.3300	3.75	4.25	4.25	4.25	4.25
Hungary	3.4941	2.4000	3.75	4.25	4.25	4.25	4.25
Iceland	6.5200	4.0200	5.50	5.50	5.50	5.50	5.50
Indonesia	19.9828	12.2500	19.77	20.			

Day job not enough to test Knight

The Warwickshire opener is in the Texaco Trophy squad to face South Africa on Thursday but, as Ian Stafford hears, resists being typecast

IT WAS always going to be a slight risk, but one, I felt, worth taking. Nip up to Derby to see Nick Knight, and have a pleasant chat with the man either over lunch or, if Warwickshire were batting, once he had been dismissed, hopefully after a quick-fire fifty.

So much for the plan. Knight was required to open for Warwickshire immediately after lunch, which meant he spent the interval padding up and preparing for an innings he knew could be important a matter of days before the England one-day squad to play South Africa on Thursday were announced.

Just under six hours later, at a quarter past seven, Knight was finally out, 109 runs for the better. As the shadows lengthened, and ripples of applause sounded out around a Derby ground bathed in early evening sunlight, Knight lifted his bat high in appreciation before turning his attention to me.

I was about to congratulate the man on his best, and extremely timely knock of the season, but he got in first. "I'm really sorry about that," he said. "You were dead unlucky today. I must admit, I kept seeing you hanging around the boundary when I was at the crease, and I was thinking: 'I'm keeping this man waiting all this time.' I'm sure I saw you appeal once for a leg before."

Apology, although extraordinary under the circumstances, accepted. After all, he had just spent a valuable afternoon and evening out in the middle, and looked every inch the potential star batsman he has often threatened to be. With a Test average of 30 in 11 matches, he has neither failed nor succeeded, but in the one-day version the statistics utter a resounding vote of confidence.

In 21 internationals Knight has averaged 50, and as the West Indies will vouch after the series just passed, he can be incredibly destructive, especially in the crucial first 15 overs, when only two fielders are allowed outside the circle.

"Yeah, since the 15 over rule has come into the game, it makes a huge difference to the way I bat as a one-day player as opposed to a three or five-day



Nick Knight's target for England is to score 40 runs in the first 15 overs of the Texaco Trophy matches against South Africa, even if it means taking risks to exploit the rules

Photograph: Peter Jay

batsmen," Knight explains. "I'm looking to make 40 odd - especially after just 11 Tests."

For a while Knight's place in

the Test side looked a certainty. He batted particularly well two winters ago in Zimbabwe, finishing the second Test with a 96 which saw England tie with the hosts. Hugely disappointed with the outcome of this game,

Knight went on to New Zealand and suffered a poor run of scores. Although a regular in the one-day internationals, he has not been picked for the Test side since.

"I wondered if the near miss in Bulawayo affected him. 'Maybe,' he says, nodding his head slowly. 'Maybe. I'm still disappointed about that when I think about what happened. It was a game I really should have won. I know I did well, and I batted right the way through the innings, but it didn't mean anything to me because I was

desperate for a win. When I analysed my innings, I felt I faced enough balls to have steered England home."

A bit harsh, I felt, on himself, but it is interesting how Knight has been in the Test wilderness since. Having

finished the second Test with a 96 which saw England tie with the hosts. Hugely disappointed with the outcome of this game,

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so as you can, and the longer you are out, the harder it becomes to make a successful return." Knight explains. "It's important to take the chance when it comes your way, and clearly it's been felt in some quarters that I've failed to do

"Of course I'm hungry for more, much more, but if you spend too long thinking about your chances of being recalled, it can also work against you. You begin to place yourself under pressure, you grow tense, and it becomes counter-productive. If you wake up and say: 'I've really got to make a big score today,' then you've immediately placed yourself at a disadvantage."

Which is why he also does not allow himself to worry over what his likely competitors to

Test opening slot, batsmen like

Mike Atherton, Darren Maddy

and Mark Butcher, are up to. "If

they're doing better than me, then good luck to them. If I

think about them, it detracts

from my own performance. All

I can do is give myself the best

chance of selection by scoring

runs. That's why a hundred

like today's always helps."

He pauses, and looks out over the

outfield. "You have to be totally focused, and I just don't see how you can be if you worry about others."

Knight's role in the forthcoming one-day series, always guaranteed after his Caribbean performances, is enhanced not only by his remarkable fielding displays at slip, but also by his experience of the main-line South African bowling attack of Allan Donald and Shanta Pollock, two Warwickshire colleagues.

"We know each other pretty well," Knight says. "I'm not sure whether the advantages cancel each other out, though. I know exactly how they will bowl to me, but they'll know how I'll try and bat against them."

"They're going to make it tough, maybe even more so in the Test series. Donald's one of the very best bowlers in the

world, and Pollock's fast emerging into that category, too, but England have no reason not to be confident."

And what of Knight? Is he confident that this summer will be a productive one? He smiles. "I hope so," he says. "I'm in possession of a place right now for the one-day series, and it's up to me to play well enough in this, and in the County Championship, to force my way back into the Test side. I love international cricket and I just can't get enough of it. As always, the chance is there. I've just got to make sure I take it."

His century the other day in Derby would not have done him any harm, then, in this case, even if he felt bad about holding me up. "Maybe you bring me luck," he suggested, as he headed off for a well-earned shower. He can speak for himself.

"There's no way I want to be categorised as a one-day player... I know that I'm good enough to be a top Test batsman"

sat out both last summer's Ashes home series, and the Test match part of the West Indies tour over last winter. Knight appreciates how important it is to himself, but it is interesting how Knight has been in the Test wilderness since. Having

finished the second Test with a 96 which saw England tie with the hosts. Hugely disappointed with the outcome of this game,

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so as you can, and the longer you are out, the harder it becomes to make a successful return." Knight explains. "It's important to take the chance when it comes your way, and clearly it's been felt in some quarters that I've failed to do

Newcastle lay waste to Cotton's apocalypse



Chris Hewett salutes the rise in standards in the Premiership and a season of enthralling rugby union

THE communist credentials of Sir John Hall and Nigel Wray are rather less than impeccable, but Fran Cotton continues to pursue them with McCarthyite zeal. "They are failing England in every respect and we would be well rid of them," he storms in the latest dispatch from his witch-sniffer's chamber. Clearly, he will not rest until his *bête noire* are burned at the stake in central Twickenham and their private parts brought to him on an oval-shaped platter.

Hall and Wray have certainly acted with a degree of temerity in reinventing the English game; to be sure, Bath and Leicester may never forgive what he did to them. But few of the hundreds of thousands of paying customers who patronised this season's Allied Dunbar Premiership are able to work out how the Cotton knickers - all white, presumably, with a red rose on each cheek - became so unfathomably twisted.

What those rank and file supporters witnessed between the middle of August and the middle of May was club rugby of a standard unimaginable a mere two years previously. Much of the dynamite was planted by Hall's Newcastle and Wray's Saracens, but not all of it. Richmond brought something new to the domestic scene. Gloucester enjoyed a starting and thoroughly heretical

flirtation with the 15-man game and if the more traditional heavyweights flattered to deceive, some of that flattery was made of top-drawer material.

The owner-clubs have made it clear that international and representative rugby are total irritants that constitute interference with their commercial interests," insists Fran, his famous chin jutting from coast to coast. "This will cause the demise of English rugby." Oh yeah? From where would Steve Ravenscroft, George Chuter, Danny Grewcock and Ben Sturham emerge, if not from Saracens? Would Jonny Wilkinson have matured so rapidly outside Newcastle's profoundly professional dressing-room culture? Who brought Spencer Brown and Dominic Chapman to the notice of the England selectors, if not Richmond?

Consult experienced Welsh internationals like Scott Quinnell and Adrian Davies and they will tell you the principality is awash with front-line players desperate for a move across the Severn Bridge. Cottonites will of course accuse them of being it for the money, but the fact of the matter is that after a single season of Premiership rugby, England can now point to a high-profile club competition that bears comparison with the French championship. Rob Andrew puts in a pat with the Five Nations while François Pienaar, no less, places it along-



Newcastle's unashamedly physical approach secured the Allied Dunbar Premiership title, which they celebrated after their defeat of Harlequins on Sunday. Photograph: Allsport

side Super 12. They should know.

"It has been a privilege to be part of something that has set the game alight in this country," said Andrew on Sunday, serene in the aftermath of Premiership triumph. "The Bath and Leicesters, the Harlequins and Wasps, have been central to the club scene for many years, but there is a new wave in English rugby now and as a result, we are witnessing an explosion of interest. Some of the sights these past few weeks have been astonishing, way beyond anything we could have hoped

for when the sport went pro."

When Andrew steps back and considers what he has achieved at Kingston Park, he will be more astonished still: for all the class and cosmopolitan chic of Saracens, it was Newcastle who defined the Premiership with their intense brand of unashamedly physical rugby. They were cast early on as the villains of the piece - the establishment hated them because of Hall's abrasive setting of the market rate, the purists loathed them for their "route one" style and opponents feared them for the simple rea-

son that no one enjoys being beaten up. All of which was mere grist to the Georgie mill.

They were even able to take a principled stand in marginalising Tim Stimpson, the England and Lions full-back who, in many eyes, was the highest-flying Falcon in the nest. Stimpson's contractual contretemps restricted him to 11 senior appearances, two of them as a replacement, and yesterday's confirmation of his move to Leicester will not have caused the purists to have a flicker of an eyelid on Tyneside. The startling emergence of Stuart Legg as a wing-heeled

Chris Hewett's Premiership dream team

15 Chris Cattling (Gloucester)
Simply the best counter-attacking full-back in town.

1 Roberto Graz (Saracens)
An absolute bear of a man. Just don't let him hug you.

2 Ross Nesdale (Newcastle)
The very epitome of the unsung hero.

3 Paul Wallace (Saracens)
Plays by his own rules and gets away with murder.

4 Doddie Weir (Newcastle)
The best line-out forward in Europe by two clear feet.

5 Danny Grewcock (Saracens)
Big, quick, aggressive. What more do you want?

6 Tony Diprose (Saracens)
Out of position here, but class knows no boundaries.

7 Pat Lam (Newcastle)
The iconic islander. A peerless all-round loose.

8 Dean Ryan (Newcastle)
Because every side needs a bit of nasty. Bless him.

9 Agustin Pichot (Richmond)
Under-valued, under-paid but still over here. Just

10 Michael Lynagh (Saracens)
He had the loc, damn him. Nobody did it better.

11 Austin Healey (Leicester)
Cheeky chappie or complete wind-up? You're the judge.

12 Philippe Sella (Saracens)
No linguist, but one hell of a centre. He'll be missed.

13 Allan Bateman (Richmond)
Majestic. Everybody's favourite midfield maestro.

14 Ryan Constable (Saracens)
Bags of pace, plenty of brainpower and no fuss.

15 Chris Cattling (Gloucester)
Simply the best counter-attacking full-back in town.

There will be a different look to them next season: Alan Tait, such a ship-steadying influence in midfield, may soon decide to knock it on the head. "I think I've done my bit," he said on Sunday night - and recent performances suggest that Nick Popplewell and Vaiaga Tuigamala are descending the far side of the mountain. But then, Saracens must also reorganise now that Michael Lynagh and Philippe Sella have opted for pipe and slippers.

In fact, every Premiership side will spend the summer upping next season's ante; Bath

and Leicester have already committed themselves to buying big, as have Sale. (It would be interesting to know exactly how Cotton's increasingly dinosaurian splutterings are viewed by his local club). The new 14-team format is well over the top - a quality control expert would describe 12 as just about workable and 10 as spot on - but with Bedford, that grand old rugby town, back on the boards and West Hartlepool consolidating the North-east revival, rugby is very much on the map. All of the map.

Lens want United to dig deep for Foé

Football

By Rupert Metcalf
and Alan Nixon

HAVING already broken their transfer record in a summer when paying fees for players is likely to be the exception rather than the rule, thanks to Jean-Marc Bosman, Manchester United are in danger of being regarded as a soft touch.

After paying £10.75m to PSV Eindhoven for the Dutch defender Jaap Stam, United are becoming involved in another bidding battle. The French club, Lens, are asking as much as £8m, according to some reports, for their midfielder Marc-Vivien Foé, who will be part of Cameroon's World Cup squad.

The new French champions have already rejected one offer – believed to be £3m – from United for Foé. Personal terms have already been discussed by both the player and the Premiership club, but the fee is far from settled.

"I have to say at this moment that the two clubs are a long way apart," Martin Edwards, United's chairman, said. It is believed that Lens may be prepared to sell their man for £5m.

"We will be speaking to Lens again either tomorrow or Wednesday," another United director, Maurice Watkins, said yesterday. The Old Trafford club have warned Lens that they will not be exploited.

United are to ask the Football Association if the Charity Shield against Arsenal at Wembley, scheduled for 9 August, can be brought forward. They are due to play a qualifier for next season's Champions League just three days later.

Howard Kendall, the Everton manager, was summoned from his holiday by the Goodison Park club's chairman, Peter Johnson, yesterday for talks about his future.

Kendall's job is by no means secure, after a season in which his team only just escaped relegation to the Nationwide League. He has had to sacrifice

his holiday in Magaluf, Spain, to attend these talks. A decision on his future is likely today or tomorrow.

Kendall is keen on Bolton's Alan Thompson and Rangers' Alex Cleland as he plans for next season – but his list of transfer targets may not be enough to save his job.

Martin O'Neill, unsettled at Leicester City, would become a favourite for the Everton job if Kendall goes – although the former Northern Ireland international has also been linked with Celtic, and he may consider a Champions' League campaign a more attractive proposition than the task of satisfying expectations at Goodison.

The Nottingham Forest manager, Dave Bassett, who has been linked with the vacancy at Sheffield Wednesday, is likely to be offered an improved contract by the First Division champions in an attempt to keep him at the City Ground.

Wednesday's position is that

a new manager is unlikely to be appointed for at least a week.

"The chairman [Dave Richards, who is abroad on business] and the board know where they are going and they will make a decision when they are ready," the club's secretary, Graham Mackrell, said yesterday.

Charlton's Welsh international winger, John Robinson, is close to agreeing a £1.5m move to Nottingham Forest – which is expected to go through even if Athletic are promoted to the Premiership after Monday's First Division play-off final against Sunderland.

Robinson is in the Wales squad for the friendlies in Malta on 3 June and Tunisia on 6 June – as is Wolves' 17-year-old defender Ryan Green, who will have a second home, especially here in Florida.

The centrepiece of the Vil-

lage, a £350m (£216m) develop-

ment which will include six

golf courses, shops and a hotel,

is the World Golf Hall of Fame.

Yesterday, in the highlight of the opening festivities, saw the in-

duction of Johnny Miller and

Nick Faldo, along with 71 mem-

bers of the old Hall of Fame in

Florida and the LPGA Hall of

Fame.

Faldo's six major champion-

ships – three Opens and

three US Masters – put him

11th in the all-time list, one be-

hind this country's other great



Photograph: Allsport

Just what is the matter with Nick Faldo?

ST AUGUSTINE is claimed to be the oldest settlement in America, which must make it one of the few places in the country to be on a par, age wise, with the Old Course at St Andrews. Last weekend saw the opening of the new World Golf Village near the town. "St Andrews will always be the home of golf," said Michael Bonallack, secretary of the Royal and Ancient, "but these days everyone dangles 162 18-inch long prisms, 73 of which now contain the images of the inducted members."

At the top of the spire of the Hall of Fame building, which includes exhibitions on the history of the game complete with a replica of the bridge over the Swilcan Burn, is the "Sanctuary". From a spiral chandelier dangles 162 18-inch long prisms, 73 of which now contain the images of the inducted members.

A time for reflection, then. Whether Faldo's mastery is all in the past or will return in the future is open for debate. What is not in doubt is that it is not in the present.

Faldo has only recorded one top 10 finish this season and has plunged out of the top 20 in the world rankings. His thesis that his form was close to his 1990 zenith was blown apart when he missed a putt from 18 inches on the last hole at Augusta to miss the cut in the Masters for the

player from another age, Harry Vardon. Faldo was elected to the Hall of Fame last year in an international ballot along with Seve Ballesteros, whose induction has been postponed until next March.

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A time for reflection, then. Whether Faldo's mastery is all in the past or will return in the future is open for debate. What is not in doubt is that it is not in the present.

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